International Journal of Organizational Analysis

Organizational caring and organizational justice: Some implications for the employment relationship

Guglielmo Faldetta

Organizational caring and organizational justice

Some implications for the employment relationship

Guglielmo Faldetta
Department of Economics and Law, Kore University of Enna, Enna, Italy

Abstract

Purpose – This article aims to analyze, from a theoretical point of view, if organizational caring and organizational justice are compatible and complementary. It proposes a link between justice and care, expanding the common notions of organizational justice, to find a relational concept of organizational justice that can lead to organizational caring.

Design/methodology/approach – The article reviews the literature on the common notions of organizational justice. To find a relational concept of justice, it refers to Lévinas' thoughts. Therefore, it develops two complementary approaches to organizational caring and analyzes their practical implications.

Findings – The article shows that the relational approach based on the logic of gift and on a Lévinasian concept of organizational justice can constitute the ethical basis, which will most likely lead to the creation of a caring organization.

Research limitations/implications – The article is a starting point of a conceptual path that should be directed toward the theoretical and practical use of an approach about organizational caring based on the logic of gift. It is necessary to support the theoretical considerations with future empirical investigation showing the possibility of practical applications of the concept analyzed.

Practical implications – The main implication for organization theory is the possibility to propose organizational caring through the logic of gift and Lévinasian ethics as a new approach in managing relationships in the organizational context.

Originality/value – In the past, organizational justice has been analyzed as a way to an end and not as an end in itself. This concept of justice can make it difficult to find a link with organizational caring, unless it is based on organizational rules and norms. In this paper, the author proposes another concept of organizational justice rooted on philosophical basis, which can lead to a more effective approach to organizational caring.

Keywords Employment relationship, Organizational justice, Ethics of care, Lévinas, Logic of gift, Organizational caring

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the importance of care in organizations (Dutton *et al.*, 2006; Kahn, 1993; Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012). Organizational caring can be defined as a structure of values and organizing principles centered on fulfilling employees' need, promoting employees' best interests and valuing employees' contributions (Derry, 1999; Liedtka, 1996; McAllister and Bigley, 2002). It is characterized by the fact that organizational members show caring behaviors; therefore, they give and receive care from others.

International Journal of Organizational Analysis
Vol. 24 No. 1, 2016
pp. 64-80

1934-8835
DOI 10.1108/IJOA-07-2013-0697

This article is about the relation between organizational caring and organizational justice. Most scholars tend to separate the concept of care and justice, making them not complementary or incompatible. Introducing a complementary notion of organizational justice, inspired by the thought of the French philosopher Lévinas, we will try to find a link between care and justice to set the ethical basis that will most likely lead to the creation of a caring organization.

The main research question of this article is:

RQ1. Is it possible to develop organizational caring besides organizational justice?

RQ2. In other words, are care and justice compatible, or do they belong to different realms?

In this sense, we are particularly interested in linking care and justice, and one of the purposes of this article is to provide a contribution to overcome the dichotomy between justice and care. As we are going to show, this dichotomy has been created mostly from the debate between Carol Gilligan and Lawrence Kohlberg's theories.

To achieve this purpose, we have identified two possibilities:

(1) basing organizational caring on organizational justice; and

(2) basing organizational justice on organizational caring.

To investigate the first possibility, we will briefly analyze the common notions of organizational justice to show which type of organizational caring can come from them. Moreover, to investigate the second possibility, we will analyze what is caring to find a type of organizational justice based on it and show which type of organizational caring can be compatible with it.

The dichotomy between organizational caring and justice

The issue of organizational caring has been developed mostly from feminist and ethic of care theories, considering care and justice as two separate realms. Starting from the 80's, the ethics of care emerged out of the feminist literature (Clement, 1998; Dillon, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Held, 1995a) against a male-dominated view of ethics as being too impersonal in ignoring the importance of the special relationships that exist among individuals (Schumann, 2001).

The debate begins with the critique by Carol Gilligan, a psychologist, of her colleague Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of the stages of moral development in children. Kohlberg (1981) defines the highest stage of moral development as a "post-conventional morality" in which "good actions" are those that are made according to universal standards of justice. He also says that few women achieve a post-conventional morality. The empirical research made by Kohlberg (1981) on the "ethics of justice" contributed in raising a new perspective, commonly known as the "ethics of care".

The term "ethics of care" is commonly associated with the research of Gilligan (1982), according to whom, women are not morally deficient, but they often take different perspectives in moral decision-making compared to men. Women do not rely only on justice to solve moral problems, but they tend to consider the situational and interpersonal aspects of the moral dilemmas they face. In moral reasoning, women tend to avoid an impartial application of universal rules set by autonomous people that, in Kohlberg's opinion, characterize the "ethics of justice" approach. On the contrary,

women focus on sensitivity and responsiveness to the feelings and concerns expressed by other people.

In her own words:

> […] this conception of morality as concerned with the activity of care centers moral development around the understanding of responsibility and relationships, just as the conception of morality as fairness ties moral development to the understanding of rights and rules (Gilligan, 1982, p. 19).

For Gilligan, care development would entail three main levels of care: from initial self-concern through exclusive other-oriented concern to the balanced concern for both self and others.

Generally speaking, according to "ethics of care", the following rules are secondary to preserving and developing interpersonal relationships: ethics of care focuses on character traits such as sympathy, compassion, friendship, (French and Weis, 2000) accessibility, inquiry, attention, validation, empathy, support and consistency (Kahn, 1993).

Basing the issue of "care" on "ethics of care" contributed in creating two separate realms: the realm of care, often seen as a female prerogative and mostly related to a focus on interpersonal relationships, compassion, feelings and sensitivity; and the realm of justice, often seen as a masculine feature, related to an impartial application of rules, norms and principles (Donleavy, 2008; Simola, 2003). This type of dichotomy can cause some problems when we want to develop organizational caring. Considering care and justice as separate and not compatible notions would lead to developing only organizational justice, avoiding organizational caring and developing both organizational justice and caring, but as two separate domains, gender-oriented. In the first case, we would miss the positive consequences of organizational caring for organizations; in the second case, we would have some practical problems, as some scholars have pointed out (Friedman, 1987; Held, 1995b). Considering organizational caring as a female prerogative could lead to the establishment of a sort of "feminine firm" (Dobson and White, 1995), adopting a gender-oriented view of organizations that we would like to avoid.

This is the reason that makes linking care and justice particularly interesting to investigate, if and in which sense these two notions are compatible and complementary, providing a contribution to overcome the dichotomy between them. Moreover, we think that making care and justice complementary in organizations can be important because, as we are going to show, both organizational caring and organizational justice have many positive consequences for organizations.

The importance of organizational caring and organizational justice

Investigating organizational caring is important because of the many positive consequences it has for organizations. Among the positive consequences, we can mention the following (Koblenz, 2003):

- a work environment founded on dignity and respect for all employees;
- making employees feel that their jobs are important;
- cultivating the full potential of all employees;
- encouraging individual pursuit of work/life balance;

- enabling the well-being of individuals and their families through compensation, benefits, policies and practices; and
- appreciating and recognizing the contributions of people who work there.

Another relevant consequence is knowledge sharing. According to von Krogh (1998), when care is low among members, people will try to hoard their knowledge rather than share it voluntarily. Untrustworthy behavior, constant competition and imbalances in giving and receiving information can limit effective sharing of tacit knowledge. Consequently, knowledge creation and knowledge sharing can be seriously endangered in organizations from which care is absent. In this case, we can say that we have low-care relationships in organizations that are characterized by distrust, no empathy, little or no access to help, authoritative judgment and cowardice.

On the contrary, constructive and helpful relations can speed up the communication process, enabling organization members to share their personal knowledge and to discuss their ideas and concerns freely.

The mechanisms through which caring behaviors can foster knowledge sharing and creation are (von Krogh, 1998) close and open communications between organization members; the so-called social competence, which is the ability of the members of the organization to behave and cooperate in most settings; the feeling of belongingness among the organization members of the team; the ability to see each other not just as means to an end, but as complex human beings. In this case, we can say that we have high-care relationships in organizations that are characterized by considerable mutual trust, active empathy, access to help, lenience in judgment and courage.

Investigating organizational justice is important too, because of the many positive consequences it has for organizations. Perceived justice by employees is related to many organizational outcomes, such as job performance, job satisfaction (Leung *et al.*, 1996), organizational commitment (Viswesvaran and Ones, 2002), organizational citizenship behaviors (Chiaburu and Lim, 2008; Kamdar *et al.*, 2006), corporate stakeholder responsibility (Husted, 1998; Sachs and Maurer, 2009), perceived organizational support (Ambrose and Schminke, 2003), antisocial work behavior (Thau *et al.*, 2007) and turnover intentions (Kim, 2009).

Another important finding about the outcomes of organizational justice is that employees' perceptions about the fairness of the treatment they receive from their organizations can influence their decisions about engaging in morally proscribed behaviors, such as workplace deviance, or in highly regarded behaviors, like citizenship behaviors that exceed moral minimums (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2010). It is worth noting that these behaviors are explained by the mechanism that "rule deactivation" is a mediator in the relationship between organizational justice and ethical behavior. This seems to confirm that rules and norms can be in some cases an obstacle for ethical behaviors such as caring behaviors in organizational contexts.

A last outcome of justice that seems important is social relationships, particularly those between employees and their supervisors (Masterson *et al.*, 2000). It seems that employees' procedural justice perceptions affect reactions toward organizations, and interactional justice perceptions affect reactions toward supervisors.

Organizational caring based on organizational justice

As we have said before, we have to analyze the common notions of organizational justice to show which type of organizational caring can come from them.

According to Van Buren III (2008), organizational justice, although generally connected to organizational efficiency, was a secondary consideration of management scholars' writings during the first 65 years of the twentieth century.

In the 1960s, a few contributions introduced the notion of distributive justice, or the perceived fairness of outcomes (Adams, 1963), at first through equity theory. In his equity theory, Adams (1963) asserted that the outcomes one receives should be proportional to the inputs one contributes. Thereafter, some others noted that there is more to distributive justice than simple equity; thus, we can distinguish three allocation rules:

(1) equality, that is to each the same;

(2) equity, that is to each in accordance with contributions; and

(3) need, that is to each in accordance with the most urgency (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2007).

After first focusing on distributive justice, literature on organizational justice began to focus on procedural justice, that is the perceived fairness of the procedures used to determine an outcome (Thibaut and Walker, 1975). Procedural justice refers to the means by which outcomes are allocated, but not specifically to the outcomes themselves. Procedural justice establishes certain principles specifying and governing the roles of participants within the decision-making processes.

An extension to the concept of procedural justice was proposed by Bies and Moag (1986) to identify the interpersonal component that was called interactional justice. This type of justice refers to how one person treats another. Again, the interactional justice has been conceptually and empirically separated into two dimensions named informational justice, which refers to explanations and social accounts, and interpersonal justice, which refers to respectful consideration and sensitivity (Colquitt, 2001). Informational justice refers to whether one is truthful and provides adequate justifications when things go bad, while interpersonal justice refers to the respect and dignity with which one treats another.

The interactional dimension of organizational justice seems the most consistent with an approach that takes into account interpersonal relationships, and can be a sort of relational corrective to the utilitarian side of justice that characterizes the first two dimensions.

Organizational justice was mainly applied to employment relationship, as a way to an end rather than as an end in itself. Researches in organizational justice have traditionally focused on describing and explaining how individuals behave in their work. This tradition has been termed "empirically oriented" or "descriptive" (Cropanzano and Stein, 2009). Organizational scholars have been less concerned with what is just and more concerned with what people believe and perceive to be just. In this sense, a workplace event is "fair" or "unfair" because someone believes it to be so.

Literature on organizational justice has rarely asked moral questions or critical questions regarding the implications of considering justice in the employment relationship, ignoring principled moral obligations. While outcomes and antecedents of

perceived fair treatment have been the focus of a larger body of research in organizations, the proactive creation of fairness or unfairness for employees has received little attention (Fortin and Fellenz, 2008).

Some authors have found that there are strong differences in individual notions of fairness and employees may not share the same preferences for equity (Huseman *et al.*, 1987). Individuals have different degrees of sensitivity to equity, going from:

- benevolents, who are "givers" and do not care about unfair treatment and place their emphasis on the relationship with their employer;
- equity sensitives, who strive for a balance, placing the same emphasis on having a good employment relationship and achieving desired outcomes; and
- entitleds, who are "takers" and believe that their personal outcomes are of primary importance and constantly look for ways to improve their situation relative to others and maximize the rewards given by the organization.

It seems that literature on organizational justice generally assumes an individualistic and rationally self-interested approach to fairness, rather than a normative approach. As some authors pointed out, the ideological basis adopted by the organizational justice field is pro-management, rather than employee-centered (Fortin and Fellenz, 2008). Some authors noted that the notion of justice includes also treating others as they should or deserve to be treated by adhering to standards of right and wrong (Cropanzano *et al.*, 2003). This important tradition of philosophical study has been termed "normative" or "prescriptive" (Cropanzano and Stein, 2009).

Organizational caring based on rules and norms

Having considered the common notions of organizational justice, we propose that organizational caring based on this type of organizational justice would be related to follow rules and norms (Figure 1). According to this approach, the members of an organization would develop and show caring behaviors because of organizational rules and norms, which can be compulsory, socio-cultural or voluntary and, sometimes, can be reinforced by a system of rewards and/or punishments. In other words, organizational members would care because they feel or perceive that it is just in their organizational context. This would mean that:

- caring can bring some advantages in terms of rewards (distributive justice);
- caring is demanded by organizational procedures (procedural justice); and
- caring is just because of social and interpersonal relationships.

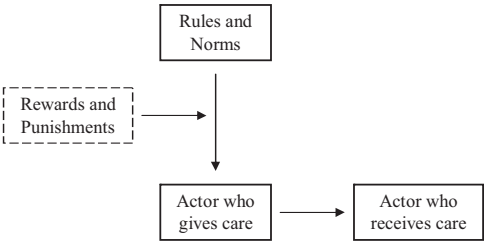

Figure 1.
Organizational caring based on rules and norms

We can distinguish between caring "norms" and "rules" (Oliner and Oliner, 1995): norms are general statements about attitudes, while rules prescribe particular behaviors in particular situations. "Help your neighbor" is an example of a caring norm, while "help your neighbor to carry heavy packages" is an example of a rule that the norm implies.

What is important in this approach is that caring behaviors are caused and driven by some forces that are external to the actor. In the organizational context, traditionally, this is related to a strict hierarchy with graded levels of authority, consistent sets of rules and the use of written documents, impersonal ways of doing, in a word, a bureaucracy. For Weber (1947), a rational legal authority, as in a bureaucracy, would generate impersonal rules that could guide individual and organizational activities. This process of rationalization is strongly related to a need for power, which is the compulsion to organize all aspects of human life so that they become controlled and predictable. That is why Weber came to see all the relationships between organizational members as relationships of power.

Here we want to highlight the "coercive" side of bureaucracy, seeing it as an instrument by which managers exclusively exercise their power to serve the interests of the owners. In contrast, some others turned their attention to the protective or "caring" side of bureaucracy, seeing bureaucratic organization as a neutral technology in which managerial power is a form of legitimate authority exercised in the interests of everyone (Sewell and Barker, 2006).

If we want to place this approach in an evolutionary scale, it would be a sort of first step to be used just in those situations where you want to control uncertainty in organizational behaviors and you do not want to let people choose for themselves how to behave. Organizational actors should, therefore, think and act on the basis of rules and norms, with only secondary regard to circumstances or possible exceptions, even if the rules or norms in question are outdated or impractical.

Even if this type of approach could bring some positive effects, creating somehow an effective and efficient workplace, it could also bring many negative effects. As Mumby and Putnam (1992) noted, an example of these negative consequences is when organizations tend to suppress individuals' emotions through "feeling rules". In these cases, feelings of compassion, caring and interrelatedness are reduced to bodily displays as they are considered only as a performance of, or reaction to, a previously conceived instrumental goal. Further, establishing strict feeling rules and, thus, suppressing the expression of emotions (even joy when performing well), make caring behaviors difficult, if not impossible.

When organizations use this type of rules, and force their employees to exhibit niceness and smiles and to suppress anger, we can say that they incorporate Hochschild's (1979, 1983) notion of "managed heart". In these cases, employee training manuals suggest workers to express concern to customers to make their voices warm and friendly and to prevent the showing of frustration and impatience. Some organizations even monitor employee interactions with customers and reward individuals who put their personal feelings aside.

In this type of approach, emotions and feeling are treated as organizational commodities and resources, and the values they are related are managed through inculcation, as they are prescribed by rules and norms. If values are widespread and internalized before they are imposed by rules, and if feeling rules are embedded in the relational context of organizations, then a psychological climate for service friendliness,

and for caring behaviors can be developed. In this case, employees would display more positive emotions toward customers and other stakeholders; this could represent a step toward the next approach we are going to discuss in the following section. According to Tsai (2001), managers can favor the creation of such a climate by implementing human resource practices and removing obstacles to employees displaying positive emotions.

Organizational justice based on organizational caring

To explore the possibility of founding organizational justice on organizational caring, making them compatible and complementary, we have to analyze what is caring to find a type of organizational justice based on it and show which type of organizational caring can be compatible with it.

The notion of "care" comes from ancient Greek philosophers, who used to consider human beings as ethical and socially responsible subjects, who constitute themselves as contributors to their community. According to Foucault (1984), ancient Greek philosophers stated that human beings can reach this by "taking care of the self" (*epimelèistai eautù*), that is by controlling and disciplining one's bodily and mental activities. In this sense, the concept of "care" is related to human beings' ability to control themselves, both in a theoretical and practical sense.

Thereafter, the notion of "care" has been developed and widened, starting from Christian thoughts. Caring has been expanded and refocused, giving more attention to the others. Even if the notion of care is still coming from the self ("do unto others as you would have them do unto you"), we can see a sense of openness and love toward the others that comes from the fact that all human beings are made by god. In this sense, "taking care" is not only individually focused, as "taking care of the self" but also opens up to other human beings, as "taking care of the others". This is a turning point that has been considered as an assumption for the modern and contemporary philosophers.

Heidegger (1927) is one of the philosophers who used the term "care" (*Sorge*) as a fundamental concept in his searching for the sense of "being-there" (*Da-sein*). For Heidegger, human beings exist in the world basically as beings that "take care". To take care means to focus toward other human beings or other existing things and artifacts. To be caring is to spend time, effort and concern in the surrounding life world and to be aware of others' needs.

Caring as openness and responsibility toward the others is clearly highlighted by the thought of Lévinas (1972). According to Lévinas, taking care of the others is not simply to be aware of the presence of others from the subject's point of view, who is worried and concerned about himself. For Lévinas, taking care is a matter of responsibility: man "is" responsibility even before being intentionality, a responsibility that he cannot chose nor for which he takes a decision, but that comes with him, and which, therefore, he cannot escape.

A Lévinasian approach to organizational justice

As we said before, we have now to find a type of organizational justice that can be based on caring. Having considered the thought of the French philosopher Lévinas about care as one of the most important, we propose an approach to organizational justice inspired by Lévinas' thought.

According to Lévinas (1972), any notion based on principles inspired by general rules, codes and procedures, and operated by a means-end rational calculus, is not

ethical. Lévinas did not suggest any new ethical theories nor did he give any normative recommendations. He tried to understand how a call for responsibility is experienced, that is how the subject receives this call and how and to what extent it can turn into something that is manageable (Aasland, 2007).

For Lévinas, the call for responsibility is beyond what is manageable; by the moment I try to manage it, I will reduce it into a normative theory within my own universe in which I am at the centre. Procedures that try to manage the relationships with the other reduce the other to someone expected by the manager, thus violating Lévinas' approach (Karamali, 2007).

The primary foundation of a Lévinasian ethics is in "being for the other". The question is how can we make the endless and timeless obligation that each of us have toward the others compatible with the responsibility that we have also for a third person, that is "another other". In other words, in this perspective the problem of justice is to respect the rights of all the others within, but also beyond, face-to-face relationships (Byers and Rhodes, 2007).

As Aasland (2007) claims, it is necessary to compare and to prioritize between several others; moreover, we are responsible also for how we compare and prioritize. Each person I meet is unique, but as I am confronted with more than one other, I am forced to compare and to judge between him or her. This is, according to Lévinas, how ethics is put into practice, again not through normative rules or norms, but as a sense of awareness of, and an interest in, the concept of justice. Therefore, for instance, when a manager has to compare his employees in distributing a limited budget among them, he must at the same time see each of them as unique individuals not only to seek as much justice as possible (by means of reason and correct calculations) but also to show mercy to any one of them.

If organizational caring has to be intended in a relational way, organizational justice has to be connected back to the relationships between people. The establishment of codes of conduct or statements of values that are administered through bureaucratic procedures that claim, if followed, to guarantee or predict ethics try to make objective what is subjective or, better, relational. Following Lévinasian ethics, justice has to be developed through the continual review and re-articulation of principles that take place in ongoing relationships between the members of the organization. In this sense, the logic of gift, which we will discuss later, and justice seem to go in the same direction. According to Godbout (2007), even if we can say that in the logic of gift there is space for rules and norms, these have to be inside the same logic. If there is a rule, this should be not a rule of equality, or equity, or proportionality; in the logic of gift, the rule must to be created at the same time we give a gift, and it must remain into the gift relationship, or even cancelled, if it is not oriented to a good relationship.

According to Bevan and Corvellec (2007), there are some Lévinasian ethical elements to be infused into managerial context to create better conditions to develop and foster caring behaviors. Some of them are:

- providing answers, trying to not delay the responding action; these answers should be local and contingent in the sense of being part of a here and now. Managers should beware of all generalizations, classifications, categorizations and definitions in providing such answers;
- striving for justice, extending management's responsibility to "other others", exceeding mere stakeholder management;

- focusing on vulnerability, exploring the potential consequences of one's actions for the weakest among all of those who might be affected;
- favoring the "saying" to the "said", insisting less on the content of written statements and ethical codes and more on the conditions of their delivery, also preventing a separation between what managers say and the circumstances of their saying, so that a saying does not get objectified into a said and imposed as such on the other;
- approaching proximity, not only as spatial contiguity but also as a comprehensive enactment of an obsession for the other and for human wholeness, avoiding those distancing techniques (such as incentive schemes, standard operating procedures, etc.) that objectify the other; for Lévinas, these techniques are potentially anonymizing and depriving humanity; and
- respecting diachrony, avoiding the obsessive control of time typical of managerial techniques such as enterprise resource planning, just-in-time, etc., where time is rationalized, reified, commodified and traded.

Organizational caring based on the logic of gift

We can now propose a second approach based on a Lévinasian concept of organizational justice. According to this approach, the members of an organization would show caring behaviors because they receive care.

Looking for some models or notions that have been developed in organizational literature, perceived organizational support (POS) has made a significant contribution to our understanding of the impact of caring in organizations, particularly in the employment relationship (Eisenberger *et al.*, 1986). However, as Kroth and Keeler (2009) noted, POS was not developed from a conceptual framework about caring, but from a social exchange theory (Eisenberger *et al.*, 2001). Here, the employment relationship is developed through reciprocity, as employees develop beliefs about how the organization values them. Although exchange and reciprocity theories are well established, they do not seem to fully capture caring behaviors.

Other models or notions that seem to give a contribution to caring in the employment relationship are those about leadership, in particular servant and relational leadership. According to servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), a great leader is seen as a servant first. Some of the characteristics related to a servant leader are (Barbuto and Wheeler, 2006): organizational stewardship, wisdom, persuasive mapping, emotional healing and altruistic calling. In particular, altruistic calling seems to fit into caring, as it is the positive difference a leader wishes to make in others' lives.

According to relational leadership model (Uhl-Bien, 2006), when leaders encourage collaboration and open communication and shape a trustful and enabling work environment in the organization, they cultivate reciprocity and enhance the probability that members will engage in and form quality relationships among themselves. Again, as in POS, reciprocity seems to be the main element when we want to find a relational approach in theories about the employment relationship.

Here we want to propose a relational approach that, far from being referable to the logic of contractual or market exchange, should be referred to the logic of gift.

Starting from Mauss (1950), who was the first to study this issue from an anthropological and sociological perspective, and passing through many others after

him (Anspach, 2002; Caillé, 1988, 1998; Faldetta, 2011; Godbout, 1992, 2007; Latouche, 1997; Schrift, 1997), according to the logic of gift, the circulation of goods does not take place in the form of contractual exchange, but through a set of performance and compensatory measures in the form of gifts, offerings, feasts, sacrifices, which are all characterized by the triple obligation of giving, receiving and giving back.

If we follow the logic of circulation of goods designed by Mauss, and based on giving, receiving and giving back, we should say that the three actions have the same basic logic; therefore, even giving back means giving, and the distinction between those who give and those who reciprocate is only analytical, as both are donors. We cannot consider the giving back as something that balances the relationship, which cancels the debt, by putting both parties in a state of equilibrium; this would be typical of a contractual exchange where, in the end, each party has got his due, and each party has given what he had to give. Who thinks that the gift is another form of contract or market exchange, could be refuted just asking the parties involved in a gift relationship if, when they give, they think that gifts and countergifts will balance in the long-term and, if so, do they know what will be the moment when everything is balanced.

Saying that a gift is "free" does not mean that it has no countergift, so as a unilateral and a-relational gift; the point is that, in the logic of gift, the circulation of goods does not follow the logic of calculative equivalence. The circulation of goods as gifts is not the aim of the relationship, but the relationship itself is the aim of the gift. You could also say that you do not give to receive something back, but you just give, even if while just giving, you receive also something back, but always as a gift.

The logic of gift does not focus on the analysis of what circulates, and therefore, it does not mean relationships as instruments for the effective and efficient circulation of goods; it rather focuses on the intrinsic meaning of relationships, believing that the circulation of goods is instrumental for the development of relationships. According to the logic of gift, what counts in the circulation of goods is not the economical aspect, but the relational one. We can say that in some informal networks, economy is at the service of the social network, and not vice versa: relationships and ties among people are the priority (Faldetta and Paternostro, 2011). In other words, in the informal and interpersonal relationships that are developed within and outside business organizations, the economic action is instrumental for the development of the relationships themselves, and not vice versa (Granovetter, 1985); the relationships among the economic actors or the members of an organization can be the priority, because people are acting as human beings and not as "functions" or "roles".

If the development of relationships is the priority, the focus shifts from what circulates to the meaning of circulation. In this perspective, the first objective is not researching some gain. People do not rationally calculate if they are earning something from the exchange; therefore, the exchanged goods are economically equivalent. What counts is if the circulation of goods is meaningful for the development of relationships.

One of the main elements of the logic of gift is that people should feel permanently indebted to each other; Godbout (1996) calls it a "state of mutual positive debt", as the parties that are involved in the relationship think to give others less than they receive. One might ask where the force that drives people to donate comes from. Perhaps, it comes from the fact that the gift process does not begin by giving, but by receiving. If people are "rich" and "abundant", rather than "needy", then they should be in a sort of permanent debt. They give because they realize that they belong to the same system of

gift and to the same system of relationships. Goods circulate as gifts because of this system of relationships that is at same time intrinsic and transcendent to them (Anspach, 2002).

If we specifically refer to organizational caring (Figure 2), it needs emotional resources that can be powered or dried up by the relationships that occur among the members of an organization.

Kahn (1993) found five patterns of recurring acts of care giving and withholding care among the members of an organization:

(1) *Flow*: That is characterized by care giving flowing from agency superiors to subordinates during role-related interactions.

(2) *Reverse flow*: That is characterized by reverse care giving in hierarchical relationships, with agency subordinates giving unreciprocated care to superiors.

(3) *Fragmented*: That is characterized by a cycling of care giving between a superior and a subordinate who simultaneously replenish one other while withholding care from others for whom they are responsible.

(4) *Self-contained*: That is characterized by the temporary retreat of subsystem members into mutual care giving that occurs outside the hierarchical structure.

(5) *Barren*: That is characterized by a mutual lack of care giving between superiors and subordinates.

The logic of gift applied to organizational caring aims not only to provide emotional support to the members of organizations but also to prevent the "drying up" or the "burnout" of their emotional resources. A possible practical implication is the need to develop stronger, deeper and lasting relationships among the members of an organization, and particularly between employer and employees.

Conclusion

At the end of this article, we can say that organizational caring can be analyzed and developed using both the approaches we have presented. We think that these approaches have to be seen in an evolutionary and complementary sense. At first, you care because there is a rule that imposes you to do it, and there is also a reward (or a punishment) if you do it (or if you do not do it); then, after you have interiorized the rule

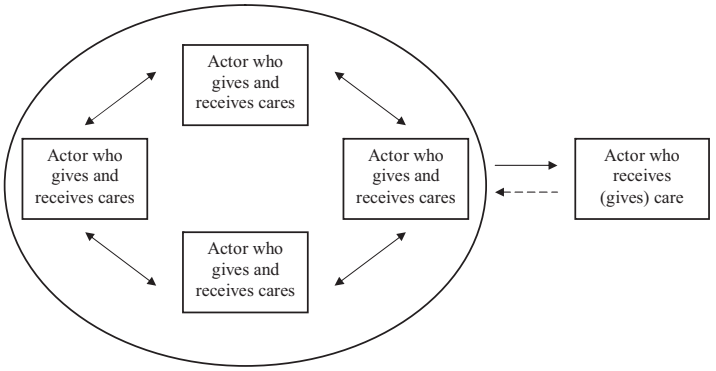

Figure 2.
Organizational caring based on the logic of gift

in practice, you realize that you have to care because of the others and because you constantly receive care, and so you make the rule living in a relational sense.

In a Lévinasian sense, this can be true only if justice and care come from the other and from the "third" (that is the "other other"). It makes little difference whether one compiles a set of rules for good conduct, sets up procedures to satisfy one's own interest, designs an algorithm to assess the consequences of corporate action or even elects some special virtues to cardinal managerial virtue (Bevan and Corvellec, 2007). All of these can be just reductions, judgmental categories, preferences or modes of understanding that are egologically specific to whoever enunciates them. The call coming from the other and from the third always comes first, in the same way as questions always pre-exist answers, which is why my responsibility is engaged before any acting or awareness of mine.

"Care" is a notion that most human beings can feel through their lives and their personal histories. Even if you cannot describe it in words, you can feel it in the way a parent behaves toward his child, a teacher behaves toward his student, a doctor behaves toward his patients or a manager behaves toward his employees (von Krogh, 1998).

People who care seem to have that basic human property of being able to continuously direct attention toward other human beings; moreover, caring behaviors inevitably refer to interpersonal relationships: when people interact among themselves with care, it seems that open, deep and non-demanding relationships are established. Care is not an object but a type of relation, a relation among human beings when they interact among them.

Coming to some practical implications, according to von Krogh (1998), there are many everyday ways to hinder care in organizations. For example, establishing bureaucracy with clear job descriptions and reinforcing it with strong control mechanisms and clearly articulated sanctions to be expected when high performance targets are not met; offering weak job security and unjust behavior toward employees (such as firing people without giving adequate explanations); tolerating injustice such as allowing (and even implicitly encouraging) employees to steal ideas and present them as their own; establishing strict feeling rules and suppressing the expression of emotions; and creating highly individualistic incentive systems.

On the other hand, there are also many ways by which management can foster care. For example, an incentive system with particular focus on access to help and other behaviors that build up care in organizational relationships; mentoring programs that give senior members of the organization a clear responsibility for helping junior members to grow and actualize their full potential in the organization; trust, openness and courage as explicitly stated values by top management; training programs in care-based behavior that show organization members care in practice and how to encourage care in relationships; and social events likely to stimulate good relationships.

References

Aasland, D.G. (2007), "The exteriority of ethics in management and its transition into justice: a Lévinasian approach to ethics in business", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 220-226.

Adams, J.S. (1963), "Toward an understanding of inequity", *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 67 No. 5, pp. 422-436.

Ambrose, M.L. and Schminke, M. (2003), "Organizational structure as a moderator of the relationship between procedural justice, interactional justice, perceived organizational support, and supervisory trust", *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 88 No. 2, pp. 295-305.

Anspach, M. (2002), *A charge de revanche: Figures élémentaires de la réciprocité*, Editions du Seuil, Paris.

Barbuto, J.E. and Wheeler, D.W. (2006), "Scale development and construct clarification of servant leadership", *Group & Organization Management*, Vol. 31 No. 3, pp. 300-326.

Bevan, D. and Corvellec, H. (2007), "The impossibility of corporate ethics: for a Lévinasian approach to managerial ethics", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 208-219.

Bies, R.J. and Moag, J.S. (1986), "Interactional justice: communication criteria for fairness", in Lewicki, R.J., Sheppard, B.H. and Bazerman, M.H. (Eds), *Research on Negotiation in Organizations*, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, Vol. 1, pp. 43-55.

Byers, D. and Rhodes, C. (2007), "Ethics, alterity, and organizational justice", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 239-250.

Caillé, A. (1988), *Critique de la raion utilitarie: Manifeste du Mauss*, Editions La Découverte, Paris.

Caillé, A. (1998), *Le tiers paradigme: Anthropologie philosophique du don*, Editions La Découverte, Paris.

Chiaburu, D.S. and Lim, A.S. (2008), "Manager trustworthiness or interactional justice? Predicting organizational citizenship behavior", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 83 No. 3, pp. 453-467.

Clement, G. (1998), *Care, Autonomy, and Justice: Feminism and the Ethic of Care*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.

Colquitt, J.A. (2001), "On the dimensionality of organizational justice: a construct validation of a measure", *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 86 No. 3, pp. 386-400.

Cropanzano, R., Bowen, D.E. and Gilliland, S.W. (2007), "The management of organizational justice", *Academy of Management Perspectives*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 34-48.

Cropanzano, R., Goldman, B. and Folger, R. (2003), "Deontic justice: the role of moral principles in workplace fairness", *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, Vol. 24 No. 8, pp. 1919-1024.

Cropanzano, R. and Stein, J.H. (2009), "Organizational justice and behavioral ethics: promises and prospects", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 193-233.

Derry, R. (1999), "The mother-child paradigm and its relevance to the workplace", *Business and Society*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 217-225.

Dillon, R.S. (1992), "Respect and care: toward moral integration", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 105-131.

Dobson, J. and White, J. (1995), "Toward the feminine firm: an extension to Thomas White", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 463-478.

Donleavy, G.D. (2008), "No Man's land: exploring the space between Gilligan and Kohlberg", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 80 No. 4, pp. 807-822.

Dutton, J.E., Worline, M.C., Frost, P.J. and Lilius, J.M. (2006), "Explaining compassion organizing", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 51 No. 1, pp. 59-96.

Eisenberger, R., Armeli, S., Rexwinkel, B., Lynch, P.D. and Rhoades, L. (2001), "Reciprocation of perceived organizational support", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 86 No. 1, pp. 42-51.

Eisenberger, R., Huntington, R., Hutchison, S. and Sowa, D. (1986), "Perceived organizational support", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 71 No. 3, pp. 500-507.

Faldetta, G. (2011), "The logic of gift and gratuitousness in business relationships", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 100 No. 1, pp. 67-77.

Faldetta, G. and Paternostro, S. (2011), "The logic of the gift and its value: a new perspective for business management", *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 30 No. 6, pp. 594-604.

Fortin, M. and Fellenz, M.R. (2008), "Hypocrisies of fairness: towards a more reflexive ethical base in organizational justice research and practice", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 78 No. 3, pp. 415-433.

Foucault, M. (1984), *Le souci de soi*, Gallimard, Paris.

French, W. and Weis, A. (2000), "An ethics of care or an ethics of justice", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 27 Nos 1/2, pp. 125-136.

Friedman, M. (1987), "Beyond caring: the de-moralization of gender", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 87-110.

Gilligan, C. (1982), *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Godbout, J.T. (1992), *L'Esprit du don*, Editions La Découverte, Paris.

Godbout, J.T. (1996), *Le Langage du don*, Jacques T. Godbout et Èditions Fides, Montreal.

Godbout, J.T. (2007), *Ce qui circule entre nous: Donner, recevoir, render*, Editions de Seuil, Paris.

Granovetter, M. (1985), "Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 91 No. 3, pp. 481-510.

Greenleaf, R.K. (1977), *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, Paulist Press, New York, NY.

Heidegger, M. (1927), *Sein und zeit*, Mondadori, Milano.

Held, V. (1995b), "The meshing of care and justice", *Hypatia*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 128-132.

Held, V. (Ed.) (1995a), *Justice and Care: Essential Readings in Feminist Ethics*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.

Hochschild, A.R. (1979), "Emotion work, feeling rules and social structure", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 85 No. 3, pp. 551-575.

Hochschild, A.R. (1983), *The Managed Heart*, University of California Press, Berkley, CA.

Huseman, R., Hatfield, J. and Miles, E. (1987), "A new perspective on equity theory: the equity sensitivity construct", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 222-234.

Husted, B.W. (1998), "Organizational justice and the management of stakeholder relations", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 17 No. 6, pp. 643-651.

Kahn, W.A. (1993), "Caring for the caregivers: patterns of organizational caregiving", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 539-563.

Kamdar, D., McAllister, D.J. and Turban, D.B. (2006), "All in a day's work: how follower individual differences and justice perceptions predict OCB role definitions and behavior", *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 91 No. 4, pp. 841-855.

Karamali, E. (2007), "Has the guest arrived yet? Emmanuel Lévinas, a stranger in business ethics", *Business Ethics: A European Review*, Vol. 16 No. 3, pp. 313-331.

Kim, H. (2009), "Examining the role of informational justice in the wake of downsizing from an organizational relationship management perspective", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 88 No. 2, pp. 297-312.

Koblenz, M. (2003), "Ten best practices of companies that care", *Employment Relations Today*, Vol. 30 No. 3, pp. 1-7.

Kohlberg, L. (1981), *Essays on Moral Development*, Harper & Row, New York, NY.

Kroth, M. and Keeler, C. (2009), "Caring as a managerial strategy", *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 8 No. 4, pp. 506-531.

Latouche, S. (1997), *L'autre Afrique. Entre don et marché*, Albin Michel, Paris.

Lawrence, T.B. and Maitlis, S. (2012), "Care and possibility: enacting an ethic of care through narrative practice", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 37 No. 4, pp. 641-663.

Leung, K., Smith, P.B., Wang, Z. and Sun, H. (1996), "Job satisfaction in joint venture hotels in china: an organizational justice analysis", *Journal of International Business Studies*, Vol. 27 No. 5, pp. 947-962.

Lévinas, E. (1972), *Humanisme de l'autre homme*, Fata Morgana, Saint-Clement-la-Riviere.

Liedtka, J. (1996), "Feminist morality and competitive reality: a role for an ethic of care?", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 179-200.

McAllister, D.J. and Bigley, G.A. (2002), "Work context and the definition of self: how organizational care influences organization-based self-esteem", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 45 No. 5, pp. 894-904.

Masterson, S.S., Lewis, K., Goldman, B.M. and Taylor, M.S. (2000), "Integrating justice and social exchange: the differing effects of fair procedures and treatment on work relationships", *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 43 No. 4, pp. 738-748.

Mauss, M. (1950), *Sociologie et anthropologie*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

Mumby, D.K. and Putnam, L.L. (1992), "The politics of emotion: a feminist reading of bounded rationality", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 465-486.

Oliner, P.M. and Oliner, S.P. (1995), *Towards a Caring Society: Ideas into Action*, Praeger, Westport.

Sachs, S. and Maurer, M. (2009), "Toward dynamic corporate stakeholder responsibility", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 85 No. 3, pp. 535-544.

Schrift, A.D. (Ed.) (1997), *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, Routledge, New York, NY.

Schumann, P.L. (2001), "A moral principles framework for human resource management ethics", *Human Resource Management Review*, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 93-111.

Sewell, G. and Barker, J.R. (2006), "Coercion versus care: using irony to make sense of organizational surveillance", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 31 No. 4, pp. 934-861.

Simola, S. (2003), "Ethics of justice and care in corporate crisis management", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 46 No. 4, pp. 351-361.

Thau, S., Aquino, K. and Wittek, R. (2007), "An extension of uncertainty management theory to the self: the relationship between justice, social comparison orientation, and antisocial work behaviors", *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, Vol. 92 No. 1, pp. 250-258.

Thibaut, J. and Walker, L. (1975), *Procedural Justice: A Psychological Analysis*, Wiley, New York, NY.

Tsai, W. (2001), "Determinants and consequences of employee displayed positive emotions", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 497-512.

Uhl-Bien, M. (2006), "Relational leadership theory: exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing", *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 17, pp. 654-676.

Van Buren, III, H.J. (2008), "Fairness and the main management theories of the twentieth century: a historical review, 1900-1965", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 82 No. 3, pp. 633-644.

Viswesvaran, C. and Ones, D.S. (2002), "Examining the construct of organizational justice: a meta-analytic evaluation of relations with work attitudes and behaviors", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 38 No. 3, pp. 193-203.

von Krogh, G. (1998), "Care in knowledge creation", *California Management Review*, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 133-153.

Weber, M. (1947), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Free Press, Glencoe, IL.

Zoghbi-Manriqe-de-Lara, P. (2010), "Do unfair procedures predict employees' ethical behavior by deactivating formal regulations?", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 94 No. 3, pp. 411-425.

Further reading

Greenberg, J. (1990), "Organizational justice: yesterday, today, and tomorrow", *Journal of Management*, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 399-432.

Styhre, A., Roth, J. and Ingelgård, A. (2002), "Care of the other: knowledge-creation through care in professional teams", *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 503-520.

About the author

Guglielmo Faldetta is an Associate Professor of Organization and Human Resource Management at the Department of Economics and Law, University "Kore" of Enna, Italy. He has a PhD in business management by University of Catania, Italy. He teaches organization theory and design, human resource management and corporate social responsibility. He has published many articles and books about business organization, specifically on topics like business ethics, corporate social responsibility, organizational culture, interpersonal relationships and work–life balance. He is currently working on gift giving and reciprocity in business management and organization. Guglielmo Faldetta can be contacted at: guglielmo.faldetta@unikore.it