

February, 2022



Frank Cunningham on *The Ethics of Care*

At a time when 'freedom' has become the rallying cry of those who oppose government mandates intended to protect people from Covid-19, a look at the ethics of care is timely. The 'freedom convoy' in Ottawa relied heavily on the idea that individual freedom is a priority over other concepts of how people should live together and how we should care for each other.

Frank Cunningham, a well-known Canadian philosopher, strongly supported the work of *The Care Economy* group and decided to write an article that focuses on why people should care about prioritizing care – and why that priority requires a collective, not an individual, approach.

Frank calls on centuries of philosophical thought to defend three main ideas. One is that those who are most vulnerable should be given priority; we should not merely pursue the greatest good for the greatest number. The second idea he advances is that we are all trustees of the common resources necessary for social well-being - now in the present and for the future. This contrasts with the idea that care should be private property, an exclusionary concept. The third idea concerns citizenship, whereby people are not only willing to be governed but are actively engaged in governance.

Frank died on February 4, 2022. This article is his last published work.

Frank Cunningham, "Why Care: Philosophical Defences" Contours Journal, vol. 11. 2022

This intervention is offered as philosophical support for "The Care Economy Statement" initiated by five distinguished Canadian researchers and activists. They propose that equitably provided care be made a core national and provincial priority in Canadian economic and infrastructural initiatives and planning. Specifically, this includes child, long term, and pharmacare, but also all those structures essential to a caring society including education, housing, and comprehensive health service provision in general.

The Statement is largely devoted to the urgency and realism of care from the point of view of political economy. It assumes that Canadians in general and political leaders in particular *ought* to care.

Here is a place where philosophers can make a contribution to this vital project, namely by providing arguments for why, from the standpoint of professional ethics, everyone should care about these matters.

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For additional reading: An open access book of Frank Cunningham's work is available for free here <http://socialiststudies.ca/society-for-socialist-studies-books/>

www.TheCareEconomy.ca