What is left of the person-centred approach in the Anthropocene? Rogerian and neoliberal ideologies informing human service delivery and education

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ABSTRACT

"What is a person?" ask Short et al. (2018) when they embark on a cross-disciplinary investigation around notions of personhood and how these apply to field education. This article affirms the significance of this investigation in light of the Anthropocene, which confronts people across the globe with ethical questions as to how, and for what purposes, we do the work we do. Human beings have taken over and transformed the world as if we are disconnected from it. The "person-centred approach" is widely adopted in human services work and promoted in government discourse, but the definition of "personhood" remains unclear. Moreover, there are two opposing poles of thought that influence the definition of personhood and person-centred care. To date, the literature has been silent around these opposing thought-systems. After a discussion on the need for practitioners and educators engaged in human services industries to reflect on those opposing perspectives in light of the Anthropocene, this paper homes in on the philosophical incongruities between the neoliberal idea of person-centredness and the original, Rogerian notion of person-centred care, to provoke dialogue in the community around the purpose and ways of doing human services work.

Keywords: *Anthropocene; neoliberalism; Rogerian person-centred approach; human services workers; human service education*

INTRODUCTION

We are confronted with the Anthropocene as human service work educators and practitioners. Hamilton, Bonneuil, and Gemenne (2015) offer two definitions of the Anthropocene. The first relates to geological history and major geological turning points for which evidence is sought in rock strata. The second definition relates to the Earth as a total entity; a system that is experiencing a shift with far-reaching impacts across multiple levels of existence (p. 2). The Anthropocene is a result of people engineering, governing and structuring the world as if divided from each other and from the eco-system with disastrous consequences (Chang, 2017; Hamilton et al., 2015; Lorimer, 2017; McLeod & Benn, 2019; Robinson, 2014; Stubblefield, 2018). This second definition relates to this article, because analytical thinking and neoliberalism (capitalism) lies at the heart of the Anthropocene and a negative development in how the human services industry conceptualises the person-centred approach. The neoliberal concept of the person-centred approach is based on deficit thinking and implies that human relations and interventions are synonymous with business relations (Bazzano, 2016; Tronto, 2013a, 2013b). It inverts the Rogerian person-centred approach. As Bazzano (2016) argues, neoliberalism effectively imitates the vocabulary of humanistic and person-centred psychology, with help of neo-liberal, person-centred practitioners "producing a brand new, consumer-friendly lingo of empathy and congruence, all the while obliterating the original meaning – twisting a language of liberation for the purpose of subjugation" (p. 343).

The problem is that the neoliberal, person-centred approach has become popular practice not only in care settings across the globe, including care for the elderly, care for people with disability, and child care (Misra, Woodring, & Merz, 2006), but also in social work more generally. Short et al. (2018) argue that this has occurred without exploring the philosophical base and the associated view on personhood. Mainstream, person-centred work is premised on analytic (Anglo-American) philosophy and discourses that dehumanise people and have led to exploitative, abusive practice (p. 140). Oriel (2014) argues that the anthropocentric idea of personhood is central to the problems we experience in the world today. The human being is seen as the only *self-aware* species with the right to intervene and structure relationships with the rest of the world. Indigenous ontologies however, and recent moves towards posthumanism show that the notion of personhood applies to all beings, including animals, plants and planets. All beings are self-aware and all live intentionally. Each being has a place in the vast web of relationships that run across time and space. People need to understand their responsibility as guardians of all beings, not as owners of property or exploiters of resources. A more eco-centric notion of personhood is warranted.

Stubblefield (2018) argues that we need to decouple ourselves from the capitalist system, focus more on agency and knowingness and our engagement in peaceable relations with each other and the rest of nature (p. 22). The author of this article agrees, especially in light of the theme of World Social Work Day: "Promoting the Importance of Human Relationships" (AASW, 2019). Human relationships are essential in any work that involves people, but especially social and welfare work and education. Human service workers act as an interface, collaborate with individuals, families and communities across the continuum of care in all health settings (AASW, 2011). Tronto (2013b) suggests that, to care well,

we need to recognise that "care is *relational*" (p. 140) (Italics in the original); caring is participatory at all socio-cultural levels and not limited to market values and economic life (Tronto, 2013a).

The question remains: to what extent is care relational and participatory? Edwards and Klees (2015) point out that the idea of participation at socio-cultural levels has been around for decades, and that most people want to be involved in decisions that affect their lives. But the meaning of participation is blurred by people's different perspectives on human *being*. From a neoliberal perspective, human beings are rational consumers who participate in the market. From a liberal perspective, people are socially responsible members of society who participate in systematic processes. From a progressive perspective, people are political beings and social-justice oriented members of a collective who support and enact meaningful decision-making power (pp. 485–486).

The three perspectives all consider that the human being is a socio-cultural entity that engages in relationships that do not extend beyond the personal and social. These perspectives are informed by rational theory, which assumes that human beings are the only self-aware species with an advanced form of communication that is increasingly techno-logical (Oriel, 2014). They are the wisest of all species. Rational theory sees wisdom as inherent to human beings with psychological, rational, and socio-cultural expertise. Wisdom is not seen in terms of relationships at social, environmental, metaphysical, multilevel and multidimensional levels (Edwards et al., 2013, p. 21). However, Indigenous perspectives see wisdom as related to personal connectedness and the interpenetration of time, space and relationships at multiple levels (pp. 25–26). The Buddhist concept of wisdom also relates to multiple levels of existence, and understanding that wholesome and unwholesome actions have consequences (Bernert, 2018). Moreover, to transcend opposition and dualism, wisdom must unite with compassion; the yang with the yin, not striving for one without the other (Rinpoche, 2013, pp. 15–16). Human beings develop wisdom by purifying the mind and confronting their ways of thinking, being and doing. It means confronting the clinging "to wealth, status, ideas, identity and so on" (Bernert, 2018, p. 48), and the automatic rejection of what is experienced as a threat. It means confronting the craving for input from the senses, for them to be pleasant and agreeable whilst rejecting what is experienced as unpleasant and disagreeable (p. 48).

NOTIONS OF PERSONHOOD AND ASSOCIATED APPROACHES

Short et al. (2018) believe that (future) social workers need to inquire into the concept of personhood because analytic discourses have led to abusive practice (p. 140). Analytic philosophy is based on structural thinking, not process or relationships. It focuses on people's *objective* features, not the *subjective* qualities of people and the central role of human relationships (p. 140). Although the authors inquire into the notions of personhood in relation to the person-centred approach in social work, they do not refer to the philosophy of Dr Carl Rogers (1902–1987), even though Rogers inspired the person-centred approach. They make no reference to Rogers' insight into, what he called *the formative relational tendency*, that which "definitely forms the base for the person-centred approach" (Rogers, 1980, p. 133). Rogers focused on the formative relational tendency

of the human being, but saw it reflected in all life processes, whether individual or group, organic or inorganic. He defined it as:

> …the evolutionary tendency toward greater order, greater complexity, greater interrelatedness… from a single-cell origin to complex organic functioning, to knowing and sensing below the level of consciousness, to a conscious awareness of the organism and the external world, to a transcendent awareness of the harmony and unity of the cosmic system, including humankind. (Rogers, 1980, p. 133)

Rogers (1980) supported the Taoist principle of *wu-wei*,

> …which is really the action of the whole being, but so effortless when it is most effective that it is often called the principle of "nonaction", a rather misleading term. Buber, in explaining this concept, says: "To interfere with the life of things means to harm both them and oneself." (p. 41)

Wood (1998) points out that Rogers' idea of the person-centred approach was an integrated approach, seeing the person as a whole evolving being, not limited to linear units of time and space. An integrated view does not separate the individual from society, culture, nature or environment (Edwards et al., 2013). Roger's philosophy and his approach as a psychologist contrasted sharply with analytic philosophy and neoliberal ideology which consider the human body as a socio-biological machine that operates in linear and fixed units of time and space, as a unit of discrete parts bounded by a physical skin. Analytic philosophy and neoliberalism assume a colonising logic of a stable, divided *self* with an essential core that differs from the *not-self*; an assumption that is contested in quantum theory (Barad, 2014; Bohm, 1996; Bohm & Edwards, 1991; Joye, 2016). The worldview of Carl Rogers relates more closely to the Buddhist worldview which assumes that there is no permanent or essential self (Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1985; Percy, 2008) even though it does not deny the unique histories that each person lives and that a person does exist (Percy, 2008, p. 359). The Buddhist view assumes that the self is not fixed but a flow; the self which many people perceive as *their* self is a consequence of attachment, personalisation and internalization (pp. 359–360). The human self is one of many selves, none of which is permanent and none as they appear, because "nothing has inherent existence" (Bernert, 2018, p. 23).

Walker (1956) proposes that the Rogerian, person-centred approach is associated with a field of thought called the Self-Determinism Pole. This pole of thought includes Idealism, Humanism, Self-Directed Learning, Phenomenology and Self-Actualisation, and Democratic Government. The Self-Determinism Pole contrasts sharply with the Authoritarian Pole, which is associated with Neo-fundamentalism, Positivist thought and Discourse, Behaviourism, Learning Theory, Directive Counselling, and Paternalistic Government (p. 92). Later, we will explore Walker's proposition more deeply to provide a basis for theory-building around the person-centred approach and how it relates to the Anthropocene. We will first reflect on the Rogerian system of thought, followed by the authoritarian system associated with neoliberalism and the impact on the person-centred approach in human services work and education.

THE ROGERIAN SYSTEM OF THOUGHT

Rogers (1980) suggested that there are two ways of relating to individuals who come for help. One is by understanding *about* the individual through testing, measuring, diagnosis, prescriptive advice, and nudging the person. This type of relationship is not premised on phenomenological–existential ideology which is inclusive, but based on distrust (pp. 33–36). Rogers (1989) believed that governments and education institutions focus on "government by others" because they see the person "as innately sinful, destructive, lazy, or all three – as someone who must be constantly watched over" (pp. 136–137).

The other way of relating is based on trust and premised in phenomenological–existential ideology, following the person, just listening for people to find and choose their own directions, exploring and understanding themselves and their experiences, their troubles and resolving those problems (Rogers, 1989, pp. 37–39). This trust-based relationship is not based on external morals or what other people deem important. For Rogers, "government of the self" meant that people learn to distinguish *conceived values* from their own *organismic* values. Conceived values are external judgments and evaluations, which people take on board and internalise for survival reasons (Rogers, 1973). In the process of person-centred learning, people learn to distinguish and rely on their own, operative or *organismic* values that are not socially learned but are inherent to their personal power of choice. It is a self-directed process of learning, about people's self-governance, autonomy. It is opposite to government by others, standardisation, measurement and control. Self-directed learning is about questioning the way in which decisions are made in education and who makes them (Rogers, 1980, p. 294).

Rogers (1963) believed in the self-actualising tendency of a person, which leads to the autonomy of the human individual and a socially integrated functioning *provided* the social–environmental conditions are *optimal*. The core conditions of unconditional positive regard, empathic attunement, congruence and prizing the person for who he or she is (Kirschenbaum, 2012; Kirschenbaum & Jourdan, 2005) are essential for "self-actualisation to be experienced as a journey, not as an end-state to be achieved" (Rogers, 1980, p. 13). The journey of self-actualisation is a process of self-directed learning through agency, of human beings who live in and as a community. Learning facilitators and administrators who support self-directed learning have enough self-awareness to be able to hold a safe space that allows people who come for help to feel genuinely heard which, in turn, allows for self-healing; a process of meeting the other exactly where they are at mentally and emotionally (pp. 174–175). In a safe space there is no feeling of threat, of judgment and exclusion. The *being*, not the *doing* of the person is what counts for learning to be a *process of discovery,* purposely non-directive to help people become free and independent. This self-directed process of discovery is important, Rogers (1963, p. 89) argued, for people to learn what self-reliance or independence really means, as different from the type of self-reliance that institutions and theories of psychological science promote, which "enslave people" (p. 89). The type of self-reliance which Rogers envisaged meant that:

> By firmly setting forth a new declaration of independence, he is discarding the alibis of unfreedom. He is choosing himself, endeavoring, in a most difficult and often tragic

> world, to become himself – not a puppet, not a slave, not a machine, but his own unique individual self. (p. 89)

Rogers believed in an education that is not focused on training a particular brand of human service workers, or "client-centred therapists" (Biles, 2016). Education should focus *and* rely on students' capacity to develop themselves as practitioners who fundamentally trust their inner direction (p. 331). Rogers did not believe in *training* people to learn *about* the person-centred approach towards certification, but in experiential, non-directive learning. He rejected fixed formulas, dogmatic institutions and certifying people because that "meant that you had to define the approach and that usually killed it" (Kirschenbaum, 2012, p. 17). Rogers (1951) stressed that education should not be about producing "well-informed technicians who will be completely amenable to carrying out all orders of constituted authority without questioning" (p. 387). Imparting skills or knowledge only make sense in a tightly controlled environment where nothing changes (Rogers, 1969, pp. 103–104). Skills such as goal-setting, he argued, are based on relationships of distrust, created by people in power-positions who believe that "goals must be set and the individual must be guided towards these goals, otherwise he or she might stray from the selected path" (Rogers, 1989, pp. 136–137). Rogers did not believe in traditional education. The "traditional mode is at one end of a continuum, and a person-centred approach at the other" Rogers (1980, pp. 294–295) argued. Traditional education has the following characteristics:

> 1/ Teachers are the possessors of knowledge, the students the expected recipients... 2/ Lecturing, or some means of verbal instruction, is the major means of getting knowledge into the recipients. The examination measures the extent to which the students have received it… 3/ Teachers are the possessors of power, the students the ones who obey… 4/ Rule by authority is the accepted policy in the classroom. 5/ Trust is at a minimum… 6/ The subjects (students) are best governed by being kept in an intermittent or constant state of fear... 7/ Democracy and its values are ignored and scorned in practice… 8/ There is no place for whole persons in the educational system, only for their intellects… (pp. 295–297)

Rogers had experienced and believed in different levels of consciousness and a transcending experience of unity, the oneness of spirit in community, beyond the usual barricades of 'me-ness' or 'you-ness' (Rogers, 1980, pp. 128–129). He believed in groups that do not follow a charismatic leader, theoretical or theological dogma, or any other human formulation that always contains some kind of error; in groups of people that "begin to live in ways more appropriate to our uncertain future" (p. 334) and "develop a participatory mode of decision-making that is adaptable [and] contains its own self-correcting gyroscopic mechanism and sense of community, where respect for others and cooperation rather than competition, are keynotes" (p. 335). He believed that a person-centred mode of education would dominate a future, where "the growing, learning person is the politically powerful force" (p. 302) and a person-centred education that works towards this vision, one with the following characteristics:

> 1/ Authority figures in the situation experience an essential trust in the capacity of others to think and learn for themselves… 2/ Facilitative persons share with others,

> students, and possibly also parents or community members, the responsibility for the learning process. Curricular planning, the mode of administration and operation, the funding, and the policy-making are all the responsibility of the particular group involved. Thus, a class may be responsible its own curriculum, but the total group may be responsible for overall policy. In any case, responsibility is shared... 3/ Facilitators and learners provide learning resources… facilitators open doors to resources outside the group… 4/ Students develop their own programs of learning, individually or in cooperation with others… 5/ A facilitative learning climate is provided. 6/ The focus of the learning centre is primarily on fostering the continuing process of learning… 7/ The discipline necessary to reach the students' goals is a self-discipline [which] replaces external discipline… 8/ Evaluation of the extent and significance of each student's learning is made primarily by the learner him or herself… 9/ Learning tends to be deeper, proceeds at a more rapid rate, and is more pervasive in the life and behaviour of students than learning acquired in the traditional classroom. (pp. 299–301)

The Rogerian system of thought, Walker (1956) suggests, is associated with the Self-Determinism Pole. Central to this thought system is the actualising tendency of the human individual and the formative relational tendency toward greater order, complexity, and interrelatedness, toward a transcendent awareness of the harmony and unity of the cosmic system, which includes humankind (Rogers, 1980, p. 133). This central premise contrasts sharply with determinism, which underpins the Authoritarian Pole of Thought, including neoliberalism. Determinism holds that human action is not based on free will, but a consequence of external forces. It denies the power of the individual and justifies the need for external power systems and compliance to those systems (Negussi, 2014).

THE AUTHORITARIAN, NEOLIBERAL SYSTEM OF THOUGHT

Wacquant (2010) argues that the neoliberal state arose from struggles over and within the bureaucratic world that created a deregulated *workfare state* that is "liberal at the top and paternalistic at the bottom" (p. 217). It is an autocratic system of *social insecurity* that corrodes democracy and punishes the poor. It is a penal ensemble of public bureaucracies that "invest in human capital and activate communal springs and individual appetites for work and civic participation through partnerships, stressing self-reliance, commitment to paid work and managerialism" (p. 214).

Wacquant's argument contextualises the neoliberal concept of the person-centred approach promoted by Australian government bodies such as the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council (CSHISC, 2016). The neoliberal interpretation reflects the "Authoritarian pole of thought" (Walker, 1956), evidenced in the fact that it is not practitioners who design the training, but bureaucrats. The training package which the CSHISC (2015) has developed does not emphasise learning *processes* or thinking of theory as inseparable from practice. It focuses only on skills-development, which produces passive learners and practitioners (Morley, Macfarlane, & Ablett, 2017, p. 29) and on supporting government policies for the education and human services sector to work in consensus and in cooperation between states, territories and the federal government (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education, 2018, p. 22). There is a growing demand for workers

in the human services sector, so the Department of Education and Training (2016) has created a training package that, arguably, builds on Rogerian philosophy but is designed to meet labour-market demand and produce compliance. The promoted person-centred approach focuses on the development of professional skills such as goalsetting, futures planning and making action plans, either or not in collaboration with service users (CSHISC, 2015). It focuses on issues such as individualised funding, organisational capacity to design and deliver services for individuals, recruitment, staff training, business planning and management (CSHISC, 2015). The course structure and content is tightly structured and controlled so that workers in the field apply these skills in accordance with Commonwealth and State/Territory legislation, Australian/New Zealand standards and industry codes of practice (CSHISC, 2016). An example is the course titled CHCDIS002, which teaches students how to follow established person-centred behaviour supports. In other words, students learn to follow protocol to achieve outcomes which government bodies want. The CSHISC (2015) argues that the course unit reflects Rogers' theory but it merely mimics Rogerian concepts such as unconditional regard and trust to meet market-demands. It is not about trusting students and people who ask for help to trust their inner compass in a process of organismic growth – it supports neoliberal philosophy with the main emphasis on people's individual responsibility or self-reliance as *consumers* craving what is pleasant, pleasurable and agreeable.

Self-reliance is a widely supported concept in the community yet it is ill-defined in neoliberal government policy (Bredewold, Kampen, Verplanke, Tonkens, & Duyvendak, 2016). The dream of autonomy is widely shared among the general population, but does not match with the reality of many people in the community in need of a formal support system. To access formal supports, clients first have to recognise (accept, admit) that they have a certain physical or mental condition, which they cannot, or will not, always do (p. 25). Not all people have a natural support system, and if they do, these systems are often stretched. Where government agencies require people to rely on limited natural support capacity to, arguably, save public money, community relationships become exhausted, leading to stress and miscommunication and often greater emotional distance between people previously close to each other (p. 24).

The neoliberal, person-centred approach which governments promote is an external power system based on "utilitarian purposes of compliance and externally imposed direction on the service user" (Murphy, Duggan, & Joseph, 2013, p. 717). It is a technology of social domination, imposed upon people through chains of command that prompt people to blame themselves, not the system (Dowling, Manthorpe, & Cowley, 2006; Innes, Macpherson, & McCabe, 2006; Kendrick, 2008; Kinsella, 2000). It is self-serving, suits authoritarian governments and protects the status quo – it is divisive in that it separates individuals from their groups, and disempowers by turning them into consumers personally responsible for creating a successful "lifestyle" (Davies & Bansel, 2007). It is a new type of governmentality; a new kind of management, surveillance and control structure that does not offer people choice or power at systemic levels, but only individual choices and responsibilities (Davies, 2018; Davies & Gannon, 2006). It does not value people's organismic growth in human relationships and a form of belongingness that arises with the preliminary teachings of existential solitude (Bazzano, 2010). Neoliberalism commodifies

the human experience to meet the requirements of the market (Misra et al., 2006; Parcell & Jones, 2014); a system of self-centred egos that undermine human integrity through a rigid system of social control aimed at imposing "integrity" of a bureaucratic type that destroys the whole and strips people from their creative power of existence (Dimitrov, n.d.). It is a system of governance that favours simplistic methods and narrow goals (Skaife & Hsu, 2019). It opposes and actively *counteracts* implementation of the Rogerian, person-centred approach (Bazzano, 2016), because it ignores the value of face-to-face interactions and democratic decision-making processes, replacing these with technological communications and monitoring and quality control systems to manage people's *performance* (Morley et al., 2017; Sorokin, 2017). It assumes that resilience is not organismic, part of human beings' search for self-actualisation. In blind obedience to the market, the neoliberal idea of the person-centred approach is based on a worldview that is ethically unsound and aims to control people and collect more data, using positive psychology as an easy fix to reward unwholesome practices (Bazzano, 2016, p. 350). The neoliberal, person-centred approach does not question who makes the decisions and ignores notions of personhood in light of the Anthropocene and how, and for what purposes, we do the work we do.

NEOLIBERAL EDUCATION AND ITS FLAWS

Neoliberal education supports the Authoritarian pole of thought and its central premise of determinism. Critical pedagogy scholars argue that neoliberal education supports a government ideology that needs a challenge. Human service and social workers and educators cannot be seen as separate from each other or from politics, power and culture (Apple, 2011; Freire, 1968). Morley et al. (2017) point out that Australian social work education for example, has moved increasingly from a critical pedagogy culture to one that supports conformity and conservatism. This cultural change has been enforced by global forces and national governments that require (welfare and social work) students to learn skills that meet market and employment objectives and emphasises online learning rather than face-to-face teaching to attract a higher number of students to meet these objectives. A curriculum that emphasises "safe" knowledge to support and reinforce the status quo and its obsession with digital data-collection and "easily accessible facts" promises a homogenised welfare and social work philosophy, practice and education (Morley et al., 2017).

Education, training, health and human services and professionals have been reconstituted to become part of the market (Davies & Bansel, 2007); they have become commodities to serve the market and the state, expected to do more for less money (Apple, 2011; Ball, 2018; Connell, 2013, pp. 101–103; Morley et al., 2017; Raffnsøe, Gudmand-Høyer, & Thaning, 2016). The Australian Government Department of Education and Training authorises nationally recognised training packages, qualifications, units of competency, accredited courses and skill sets (Department of Education and Training, 2016,). Skills-development, not critical learning or self-actualisation is the objective. In Australia, modularised, standardised education and training and directive learning has become the norm (Connell, 2013, pp. 109–110).

Neoliberal universities reinforce the major split between Rogerian and neoliberal ideologies, creating an untenable gap between person-centred psychology and the instrumental

relationship-based approach common to contemporary social work (Murphy et al., 2013). Rather than entering into dialogue and reflecting on basic philosophical issues around *human being* and *being human*, these conservative universities undermine anti-oppressive practice in higher education contexts, effectively impacting on (future) social workers and service users (Morley et al., 2017). They support neoliberal governments that introduced laws to ensure the decentralisation of social and health services and produced massive structural global inequalities (Apple, 2010; Connell, 2013; Morley et al., 2017). Compliant staff who work in neoliberal universities want their students to have a happy customer experience (p. 28), consistent with the neoliberal, person-centred "consumer-friendly lingo of empathy and congruence" (Bazzano, 2016, p. 343). Their acceptance of existing inequalities in the system is antithetical to the emancipatory values and goals of social work (Morley et al., 2017, p. 27), which is why Morley et al. (2017) suggest that an emphasis on people's agency and capacity to resist is necessary, especially in welfare and social work education. Uncomfortable knowledge is not necessarily something that staff and students enjoy, but it needs to be transmitted to allow people to make informed choices over dominant relations and structures in society. Morley et al. (2017) argue that there is a place for resistance and critical pedagogical approaches in human services work education to respond to neoliberalism, because course content and style of delivery impacts directly on future practitioners' thinking and their ways of working.

Drawing from a large body of literature, Kirkman (2010) proposes that human services workers and educators look critically at the notion of *choice and control*, which has been impacted by neoliberal ideology, economic rationalism and managerialism, and negatively affects the disability services industry. This choice and control system is user-unfriendly, and the market limits the choices of low-income "consumers." Service-users, funding parties, service providers, and carers all have their own ideas as to what the best or preferred choices are for service-users. Most problematic is that those in control of the funds are still the ones in power and determine best choices for consumers. Kirkman (2010) suggests that questions should be asked about whose decisions should be given priority, because in the market-place, economic considerations, not social justice principles, determine the outcome (pp. 40–41). Services committed to social justice principles that at the same time offer individualised funding and person-centred approaches, are forced to isolate and divide individuals from their group. This process, combined with professionals' energy spent on accounting and administration processes, places service-users at risk of managerial abuse (p. 45).

Bredewold et al. (2016) similarly suggest that many human services workers and educators support the ideology of choice and control, but service delivery in general has become problematic in practice. People living in violent circumstances, for example, or people with weak community networks need help to make the step to services, so they get help from professionals to take the next step. But they are unable to make the step to other services by themselves, often overwhelmed by the intensity and complexity of their experiences. Both service providers and service-users complain about the dispersion of services, and lack of collaboration due to services competing with each other and obliged to work more for less money whilst being overloaded with administrative tasks. Data entry has become a complicated process because the type of assistance that people receive and the pace of progress is determined by the person receiving assistance, and effectiveness of service

delivery on client progress can only be measured on a personal basis (Dowling et al., 2006; Innes et al., 2006; Kinsella, 2000; Scerra, 2011).

Human services and social workers and educators are further reminded of Timmerman (2018), who points to the following "ugly" consequences of neoliberalism: people are left to sort things out by themselves; solidarity as a principle is undermined; vulnerability is considered a "bad" and shameful trait; and resilience is associated with personal performance; governments sanction communities that fail to perform according to expectation; volunteers function as a reserve-army; voluntary work is seen as a contribution in exchange for receiving public aid; and professionals are straightjacketed, unable to work in ways that fit with their value-system.

AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO NEOLIBERALISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

In *Moral Man: A Model of Man for Humanistic Psychology*, Prof Thomas Szasz (1967) talks about the importance of questioning what defines the *human being* and how humans survive. He argues that, in general, the issue of government of the self or government by others (autonomy and heteronomy) remains a concern that needs to be addressed (p. 47). After more than 60 years, Szasz's argument is still relevant, considering contemporary debates on the Anthropocene and the fact that people have created a world in deep crisis at multiple levels of existence. It is also highly relevant to the fact that the Rogerian, person-centred approach has been inverted so that people become more reliant on government by others.

Szasz stresses that people's social conditions play a major role in their conditioning behaviours. For example, people who have been educated to think critically do not easily commit to rule-following behaviour. People have grown up in societies that stress the importance of meaning in people's lives try to find meaning in their jobs and other activities. People's environments that stress the importance of living by religious codes restrict their choices in crucial areas of life. Many people in closed societies are afraid of freedom, of choice, which has kept people "stuck" in old forms of government, traditions and ways of working. Some individuals have become reclusive and stress the meaninglessness of human life. Others, however, have liberated themselves from groups to which they once belonged, seeking greater freedom and choice and, self-reflectively, find it.

Szasz's (1967) argument around the issue of autonomy and heteronomy relates to the earlier discussion over the need for people engaged in the human services industry to reflect on the notion of personhood and the paradigms they support. It also relates to Monbiot's suggestion that neoliberal ideology ignores two important economic pillars of governance – the household and the commons (Monbiot, 2016, 2018). Neoliberal ideology, Monbiot (2018) argues, is an inversion that creates ugly consequences because it is based on an economic story that disregards those pillars. There are four economic pillars: the state; the market; the household; and the commons. The neglect of the last two by both neoliberals and social democrats has created many of the monstrosities of our times. Monbiot argues (in Bollier, 2017):

> Both market and state receive a massive subsidy from the household: the unpaid labour of parents and other carers… mostly women. If children were not looked after [and

> the] ill, elderly or have disabilities were not helped and supported by others, the public care bill would break the state… There's another great subsidy … the vast wealth the economic elite has accumulated at our expense, through its seizure of the fourth sector of the economy: the commons… A commons, unlike state spending, obliges people to work together, to sustain their resources and decide how the income should be used. It gives community life a clear focus. It depends on democracy in its truest form. It destroys inequality. It provides an incentive to protect the living world. It creates, in sum, a politics of belonging.

Neoliberalism, which acknowledges only two pillars – the state and the market – disregards the power and authority of the household and the commons. It assumes that society is a business, and that the power of the state needs reducing because it interferes with the market. Neglecting the powers of the household and the commons, Monbiot (2018) continues, reduces the power of choice and control of the household and the commons. It promotes the idea of the human race, but as a race between winners and losers, suggesting that human beings are essentially competitive, evil beings. This is why Monbiot (2018) argues the neoliberal story needs to be replaced with a *restoration story*. This story replaces the one of human beings as essentially competitive, evil beings, with the narrative of human beings as cooperative, social, empathetic and good-natured beings. The hero in the restoration story rebuilds political communities and gives real power back to the people with policies that support the transition. The hero restores power to the household and especially the commons, so that the pool of community resources is held together by rules that the community itself established; with people managing the resources so that the whole community benefits, not just the wealthiest. In other words, the cultural and natural resources which all members of society can normally freely access, including water, air and a habitable earth, will not be owned privately or made fit for only certain groups of people.

Monbiot's hero story sounds applaudable, but a variety of governance norms and rules would need to be employed, which brings us back to the argument that notions of personhood and with that, governance, need to be further explored: who or what is a person, with whom and what do they share the space, and what type of governance – internal or external, or both – apply? Moreover, do human and non-human beings have the same rights and responsibilities in the Anthropocene?

CONCLUSION

This article explored two opposing ideologies that the literature to date has not placed in the spotlight: that of neoliberalism and that of Roger's original concept of person-centredness. It argued that these opposing ideologies need to be brought into discussion in human services and also human services and social work education in light of the Anthropocene. The article explained that the Rogerian, person-centred system of thought contrasts fundamentally with the neoliberal, government-supported, person-centred system of today, the latter a political instrument that dominates both the human services sector and the field of higher education. The latter plagues educators and practitioners in the field and leads to unethical practices. Neoliberal ideology does not acknowledge the story of human beings as cooperative, social, empathetic and good-natured beings. It ignores the fact that

neoliberal ideology has created a world in deep crisis, sidelining the eco-centric notion of personhood as something that relates to all beings, all playing an important role in the web of relationships across time and space. It has commodified and inverted Rogerian philosophy to effectively manipulate people's thinking and ways of being and doing in the world. It promotes the idea that government-controlled bodies are the heros in a story where people need to be repaired, analysed and controlled, to be protected from their own evil selves. It proves to be a story of a system that makes a lot of money by denying (and abusing) the power of the household and the commons, and, as such, disempowers the human race.

When *carefully* reflected upon, the Rogerian person-centred approach, which is about real power and helping people to realise their personhood, not as a form of superiority or weakness but as *agency*, can help restore the power of the household and the commons so that the whole community benefits. It can help individual people to recognise their rights and responsibilities to engage in participatory decision-making processes, change power structures and evoke culture- and systems-change through a rethinking of power relations, not only in their personal lives but also at the vertical levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy. It can help them understand the need for dialogue between government agencies and service providers, between managers and workers, between workers and clients, between educators and service providers and a diversity of service-users (Dowling et al., 2006; Innes et al., 2006; Kendrick, 1997, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2012; Kinsella, 2000). It can help them recognise that the dominant political discourse on economics stigmatises marginalised people as helpless, deficient and weak (Kendrick, 2008) and that race, class and gender issues also need to be addressed because they intensify people's traumatic experiences (Fopp, 2009). It can help people to recognise that the notion of personhood and the formative relational tendency is reflected in all life processes, whether individual or group, organic or inorganic. This recognition will help Western people to deepen their understanding about First Nations peoples and rely less on Western models of thinking.

In closing, it seems that Monbiot's idea of a restoration story can become a reality when a growing cohort of people engaged in human services work and education accepts their responsibility for life in the Anthropocene and reflects on the purpose and ways of thinking, being and doing human services work, to then ensure that Monbiot's idea of restoration turns into a real life story.

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