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Abstract submission

From "Mental Health" to Universal Care:

A sociohistorical and conceptual clearing towards abolitionist futures

The first, critical, part of this presentation aims to deepen critiques of the existing "mental health" care system through a sociohistorical understanding of its dominant context and function - namely, legitimizing the separation and sorting between the un/deserving of social assistance within the capitalist framework of compulsory labour. In this context, "psy" expertise and knowledges act as gatekeepers to insurance based on their scientific status and reproduce a fundamentally paranoid social formation subtended by economic imperatives. Sociohistorical analysis will, furthermore, enable a critical view of the the concepts of "mental" and "health" by revealing the norms they are organized around. The second, affirmative, part of the presentation rethinks our systems of care from an abolitionist perspective. Inspired by socialist-feminist theorizations of reproductive labour, it argues for an expansion and multiplication of what we value and envision as practices of care and speculates about the social architecture required to enable futures under Nancy Fraser's "universal caregiver model". Concomitantly, this requires a reconceptualization of the task and nature of "healing" that recontextualizes psychosocial distress within living material relations and is self-conscious about its political limitations. Only under such a horizon can *therapeia* – attention and service to the sick – act as something other than cruel optimism.