

***Thought and Values for American Political Economy:
Toward a State of Care and Collaboration***

by

Georgina Tobiska

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Abstract

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Georgina Tobiska

Dissertation Director: Dr. Antonio Vazquez-Arroyo

Ideas are the vehicle of real power: our choices of thinking, our beliefs and resulting ideologies, are where positive possible changes reside. Of ideas, our valuing of care for one and other, collaborative thinking, or “power to” thinking, fueling belief and action, are what sustain society. The experiential knowledge of women providing care work in particular, by our creating, nurturing and sustaining of persons, is immeasurably instructive to the importance of promulgating values overarching necessary policies and regulatory mechanisms within the United States political economy. Capitalism is a given in America, but to sustain free and fair markets within our democratic republic, state regulation of finance and economic structure are both necessary and justified by the values of care and collaboration as primary--valuing persons as persons, our interdependence, our entering and exiting the world dependent on care. Regulated capitalism has taken many forms over the international history of statecraft, and can be accomplished according to valuing care of persons in principle through policies. I explore and reveal how dysfunctions of now internationally hegemonic neoliberal thinking and the historicity of women’s care work illuminate guidance towards new visions of this thinking. I propose therefore care and collaborative values as integral to the guided thinking for policies and regulations that will sustain, creating in fact a more fair, more free political economy.

Preface

Reflexivity ~ Positionality

My research inquiries and vision are born of a privileged lived experience, which has also been challenged to endurance through hardship.

As an American, white woman with middle class, well-educated parents who encouraged multi-cultural, inclusive thinking, ecological responsibility, international study, and personal exploration of consciousness from an elementary school age, I enjoyed many privileges spiritually and materially. I was born in 1977 in the rural mountains of Washington State, amid back-to-lander environmentalists and baby boomer idealists who took the Keynesian constructed economy of plenty and egalitarian tendencies of society for granted. I experienced the stagnation of middle class life under the crumbling post-war contract devolution into the extreme materialism of the 1980s, when we saw the disenfranchisement of organized labor, the demonization of the poor and welfare state, and the institutionalized protection of the wealthy to the detriment of the middle and working classes. I hoped as many did, with the fall of the Berlin wall, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and the seeming upward trend of democratization in the world along with increasingly free markets' globalization and information technology, that democracy would become more vibrant, creating greater citizen agency everywhere. I experienced the asphalt belt, post-modern American east coast during college and graduate studies, with its short-lived financial tech bubble boom, "everything is permissible"¹ attitude ascending, and accompanying devaluation of persons in favor of profits in the 1990s.

And I returned to the rural Cascade Mountains to have children, living close to the earth, growing and preserving food, and teaching my children to do the same, writing freelance

¹ Referencing Dostoyevsky, as both *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov* present antagonists who create their own destruction by adopting the "everything is permissible" amorality, a telling suggestion of pre-totalitarian Russian social construct to today's American nihilistic cultural forms and neoliberal political economy devoid of moral values.

in a very tiny economy, a town of 800 people. I gained perseverance through psychological and material hardship, experiencing real poverty levels for years after leaving domestic violence in marriage to prioritize peace for my children and myself.

Consciously choosing the care of children and spiritual wellbeing over material goods in destructive, sexist relations was a serious battle within a market driven society marked with lack of support for such values. But endurance was gained, through simple living, cooperation within community, and delineating values for physical and emotional survival out of an American society heavily drenched in forms of domination and competition.

I learned that no matter how educated, privileged or gifted in spirit or merit a person may be, persecution, cruelty or tragedy can afflict any of us at any time, leaving us socially and economically left behind. This lends me compassion for so many Americans who also have experienced being left behind by present ideology and policies--whether they be people of color systematically disenfranchised and victimized or unemployed populists angered by a politics long ignoring basic economic well being.

I give thanks in writing this work for the basis of free thought and affirmation of others I was given, for struggles and triumphs of will over domination that bore out a perseverance into creativity and a simple life, affirming care and collaboration over all else.

Georgina Tobiska

May 27, 2021

Acknowledgments and Dedication

I want to take the opportunity of expressing the personal experiences and positioning that have brought me to a desire to write these pages. There is a twenty year gap between my first years at Rutgers Graduate Program and my return. What happened in between led me back to write this work, to reflect on what we knew, or thought we knew in the 1990s and what we know now. In between, three new human beings have come to the world through me, and they have taught me more of my positionality in writing here than any others. One may not see many political economists who start with reflexivity about their children, but for me, the children are the first and only place to begin. There is no better reflection of where we've come from or the direction we must strive to go in our thinking and our constant co-creation of society. There is no more important consideration than caring for "these least" among us. The act of doing so teaches us what essential care truly is, what each person needs, and the holes in the fabric of our society that may hinder us from providing that care. So, to my three children, Phoenix, Lucy and Michael, first and foremost, I dedicate this work, in visioning a future for ideology that guides policies formed around care and collaboration with one and other.

Secondly, I'd like to acknowledge the mentoring, care and inspiration of Dr. Lisa Hull. As a T.A. for her "Women and the Law" course in 1999 she took me under her light filled wings, not only as a student but also personally. Lisa gave me the greatest academic compliments to my mind I had ever received, and gave me courage towards thought made action. I can look back and see how she mothered me, in that sense of mothering that nurtures, allows the student to fail without judgment, listens, accepts, and fills with light where there are openings for that light to pour in. Lisa embodied care, in the academic world that can sometimes seem to consist of institutionalism, egos, bureaucracy, even stagnation. The very person she was and is, embodies vibrant, energetic health in the midst of the fight for justice, hope, creative, solution oriented thinking, and an all embracing affirmation. So, to you Lisa, I give thanks and dedicate this work and hope it approaches what you thought I could do.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Preface.....	iii
Acknowledgments and Dedication.....	v
List of Tables.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1 Interdependence: the True Bedrock of Political Economy.....	4
Chapter 2 Untying the Neoliberal Knot: Context in Literature.....	17
Chapter 3 For the Power of Ideas.....	29
Chapter 4 Of Free and Fair Markets: Their Regulation and Valuing the Persons they Serve.....	38
Chapter 5 Women’s Care Work: Integral to a More Free and Fair Political Economy.....	69
Chapter 6 Concluding Thoughts and Proposals.....	88
Prologue: The Covid “Crisis Politics” Wake Up Call.....	96
References.....	100

List of Tables

Income Inequality in the United States 1920-2010.....	53
Top Decile Income Share: Europe and the United States 1900-2010.....	54
Federal Tax Rates 1900-2020, Including Biden Administration 2021 Proposed Plan.....	56
Top Marginal Income Tax Rates, United States and European Comparisons.....	57
State of Washington Subsidized Child Care 2021.....	90
State of Washington Subsidized Children's Medical Insurance 2021.....	91

Introduction

I'm convinced that...we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin to shift from a "thing-oriented" society to a "person-oriented" society.... When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.²

— Martin Luther King Jr., the *Beyond Vietnam* speech

At the end of the day, of course, we are talking about relative values and social preferences - the preference, for example, for more equity and more stability over the maximisation of wealth creation, and a preference for the quality of economic growth rather than its quantity. That is what the debates in international political economy and in theoretical economics ultimately boil down to.³

--Susan Strange, *Mad Money: When Markets Outgrow Governments*

Capitalism will have reached its moment of maximum triumph when all social phenomena can be appropriated as private property, and when the power of the proprietor is unlimited, which would mean that everything in the social world can be bought and sold, or discarded by its owner. Then everything social will be subject to *commodification*. That is, to paraphrase Oscar Wilde, everything will have a price, and nothing any intrinsic value.⁴

— Goran Therborn, *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*

These messages focused on values derive from disparate spaces: the American, social activist Rev. King speaking in the mid-1960s, the British, international political economist Strange writing in the 1990s, and the Swedish, historical sociologist Therborn writing at the turn of the 21st century. Each uses a differing analytical or cultural lens, yet each turns our gaze to the locus of values where we need begin. The ideas are not new. But at present, the predominating ideology governing political economy in America

² King Jr., Martin Luther. "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence." Speech delivered April 4, 1967, NNRC. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/058.html>

³ Strange, Susan. 1998. *Mad Money: When Markets Outgrow Governments*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press. 190.

⁴ Therborn, Goran. 1995. *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000*, London: Sage Publications, 112.

has become grossly convoluted by the denial of moral values. The battle is cerebral: those advocating for stability, greater egalitarian agency, and the care of persons versus those contending for profit maximization and extreme materialism, compose a cognitive/moral war of principalities that has come to a head in neoliberalism's "stealth" dominance.⁵

In this year of 2021 in the United States, citizen agency and real representation is degraded, discourses of moral and social goods have devalued, upward mobility and wages have stagnated since the late 70s and a politics of the left behind is the result. These trends correlate to the dominant neoliberal ideology of the past forty years across major parties' political-economic spectrum: belief in market profits dominating all other values in political discourse. Such beliefs result in policies which have dismantled the monetary, financial regulations and social welfare programs that corrected the great depression and allowed democratizing forces to thrive.

Heed the lessons of history, the 1929 and 2008 crashes cry! I argue that as all capitalist states necessitate legal regulation to exist, re-applying financial regulations is justifiable for the very survival of our markets. I argue further for thinking and policies that re-assert moral values and representation of citizens, tempering the free market to be in fact more free. To do so, I argue for political economic thinking based on care and collaborative principles. In our recognition of our interdependence, of the needed elevation of value accorded to care of dependants and of women's experiential knowledge and capabilities, we find the needed guidance for policies, regulations and the principle of care on which political economic thinking should find its base.

The arguments herein utilize concrete lessons of history as well as moral assertions, valuing persons over materialist and meritocratic principles to dismantle neoliberal thinking and policies which have harmed the vast citizenry and most marginalized in society. Neoliberal ideology correlates to the degradation of motherhood and care work, a rise of xenophobic populism and disenfranchisement of the left behind, and a dangerous repetition of pre-depression era policy failures. The study contextualizes the current U.S.

⁵ Referencing Wendy Brown's aptly named book from 2015, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books.

socioeconomic system and dominant ideology within comparative historical changes. In consideration of American wealth and power through financial international hegemony, I suggest that the U.S. is in the unique position to demonstrate policy change: returning to a regulated financial sector and progressive income taxation,, and developing socioeconomic policies built on an ethic of care and collaboration to create a more just society at most, a more sustainable society at the very least.

Chapter 1

Interdependence: the True Bedrock of Political Economy

My purpose is to create a solution oriented discourse based in care and collaborative principles. It is a long held belief of this researcher that collaboration, not competition, leads individuals and society at large to greater goods. Indeed, it is only through our cooperation and care of one and other that we human beings have survived thus far at all.

Belief in market competition replacing all values will only lead to greater having of the haves, less having of the have-nots, to hyper-individualistic and meritocratic synthetic hierarchy, rather than a sustainably empowering society. And it is our care of one and other, cognizant of our inescapable interdependence and therefore our collaboration through empowerment where society has strength. It is time to reorient our economy not to forever grow leading us further and further apart, but to sustain through elevating the value accorded to care.

The following was written just recently within a newly published work, *The Care Manifesto*:

Over the past few decades, many of us have experienced living in an accelerating social system of organised loneliness. We have been encouraged to feel and act like hyper-individualised, competitive subjects who primarily look out for ourselves. But in order to really thrive we need caring communities. We need localised environments in which we can flourish: in which we can support each other and generate networks of belonging. We need conditions that enable us to act collaboratively to create communities that both support our abilities and nurture our interdependencies.⁶

As I engage this new text, having previously completed writing of this thesis, it is encouraging and hopeful that the Toronto based group of thinkers echo back my purposes. The Care Manifesto identifies three dysfunctional, interrelated work and care

⁶ Chatzidakis, Andreas, Jamie Hakim, Jo Littler, Catherine Rottenberg, and Lynne Segal. 2020. *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*. London: Verso, 45.

norms in Western societies: 1) unsustainable stress on families, 2) persistent inequality for women and other care workers, 3) and policy makers who are ignorant about the care work that life requires.⁷ Norms can change, as demonstrated in the history of political economy--whether children should work, how long a work day should be, whether maternal/paternal leave is an expected norm, and I'd suggest how highly we value mothering care of young and other dependents. The authors reflect:

Care has long been devalued due, in large part, to its association with women, the feminine and what have been seen as the 'unproductive' caring professions. Care work therefore remains consistently subject to less pay and social prestige, at least outside its expensively trained elite echelons. The dominant neoliberal model has merely drawn on these longer histories of devaluation, while twisting, reshaping and deepening inequality. After all, the archetypal neoliberal subject is the entrepreneurial individual whose only relationship to other people is competitive self-enhancement. And the dominant model of social organisation that has emerged is one of competition rather than cooperation. Neoliberalism, in other words, has neither an effective practice of, nor a vocabulary for, care. This has wrought devastating consequences.⁸

Devastating indeed in the wake of the covid shutdown of economies, schools, and services, and what has emerged as a crisis latent but long seen by many in our neoliberal dominated system which has denied our bedrock of being: our interdependence through care.

I follow a logical progression of thought, incited by compassion for the smallest, the “least among us” and those who care for them, in these United States, the wealthiest and most abundant of all countries in the history of the recorded human world.

I hold that ideas are the vehicle of greatest power, the realm where the potentialities of becoming and the creation of the future reside. Thus our ideas, our choices of thinking, then our beliefs and resulting ideologies, are where positive possible changes reside. Differing from the analytical political lenses of institutions or interests, my choice is to analyze through the lens of ideals--norms, culture, ideas and thought structure.

International political theorist Ian Shapiro posits that the right question to ask in political

⁷ See Jennifer Nedelsky's symposium summarizing work on *The Care Manifesto*, 2018, Presentation at the University of Ottawa Centre for Health Law, Policy and Ethics, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9sUJNVsSGM>.

⁸ Chatzidakis, et. al., *The Care Manifesto*, 3-4.

analysis is: What are the conditions in which interests, institutions, or ideals prevail? All are relevant, not one is always the correct lens, but their interplay are relevant.⁹ This is so, however as opposed to policy centered research, comparative systems research, or behavioralist analysis, I hold that for the question of forming political ideology around a guiding principle of care, the realm of ideas and ideals is where we possess true power to effect socioeconomic change. What I will propose cuts against the prevalent rights discourse of mainstream feminism, against the conception of the autonomous individual of liberalism, and it is my consistent observation that ideas presented in art, literature and political discourses often plant the seeds of major ideological changes, then leading to change in interests and institutions. So, big on ideas and ideals, I present here that as we may think of and believe in a possibility, it may become a reality.

Of ideas, our valuing of care for one and other, collaborative thinking, and empowerment or what I term “power to” thinking fueling belief and action, are what sustain society. This is in direct opposition to “power over” or dominance thinking. This position is directly contrary to a prevalent, popular belief in America, heavily propagandized by neoliberal ideology, that competition alone creates prosperity. Further, domination is an acceptable form of competition, in finance, in sex, in medicine, in education, etc. This is a narrowly materialist social-Darwinism, and it has emerged preeminent. Social Darwinism, as popularly conceptualized, posits incorrectly that evolution of human society progresses solely through competition and meritocracy. It presumes autonomous individuals, competing with other autonomous individuals, denying the root interdependence of life. “Power over” thought and action is presumed to sustain and evolve the human species, i.e. domination is dominant. In economic terms, this translates to support of a cut-throat competitive market mentality with no government regulation or overarching values of being outside of commodification and profit. But the social-Darwinist “power over” construct of the autonomous individual could not be further from the truth, as I will show in the following chapters. Our sustenance, our evolution, our progression, is intricately dependent on the care of others, from our

⁹ Shapiro, Ian. *Lecture 3: Advent of a Unipolar World: NATO and EU Expansion*. Yale University DeVane Lectures Power and Politics in Today's World, September 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s48b9B5gd88>.

entirely dependent births through our care into dependent old age and death. It is our cooperation and collaboration that sustains and progresses our society. Without “power to” interconnected care, human beings would have been wiped from the planet long ago: it is interdependence wherein power lies.

I hold that not only does care equal sustenance, care should and must be elevated in its valuation. Relegated to a lower status of activity, associated with women and people of color in a degraded form, care of others is in actuality of extremely high value and deserves being thought of and treated as such. I firmly disagree with some feminists who hold that care should be dissociated with women so as to lift its valuation from a degraded state. An example among many, Joan Tronto argues for a disassociation of women from essential care work, including the creation of human life, feeding babies in the most biologically, psychologically and symbiotically nurturing way as beneficially designed, that the association implicitly agrees that such work is degraded.¹⁰ It is not, it is of highest value. To disassociate from natural processes as women is to agree one’s natural state is lesser than men. This feminist mistake is folly. As a woman, one may choose not to co-create and perform care work of dependents, but to systematically disassociate is a grave mistake. Rather, to insist upon a higher valuation of essential care is the empowerment and affirmation of women. In this way, I would argue that the women’s movement should have been a men’s movement. Rather care, and women’s integral biological and spiritual contributions, should be elevated in association with women. Empowerment, or “power to” collaborative thinking and action, is the vehicle of this idea.

The experiential knowledge of women providing care work in particular, by our creating and sustaining of persons is immeasurably instructive to the importance of promulgating care values overarching necessary policies and regulatory mechanisms within free markets. With our historical depth of experiential knowledge in giving of ourselves to dependents, survival through cooperation and collaboration, necessitating quite regular acts of altruism beneficial to dependents, community and all, women’s wealth of

¹⁰ Tronto, Joan. 1993. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York: Routledge.

experiential knowledge should be central to structuring thought and policies of political economy. Of this, *The Care Manifesto* makes a highly salient point relevant to my thesis: the disconnect between those making policy and the those operating the sustainable day to day care economy is enormous--political elected officials have no conception of the interdependent bedrock of being for caregivers and dependents and therefore policy does not reflect the reality of our inescapable interdependence within political economy.¹¹

Free market capitalist societies are of course preeminent and the United States represents the most unregulated free market economy in the history of the world. But historical examination amply demonstrates that for societies to sustain free and fair markets, state regulation of finance and economic structure are necessary. This thesis suggests that beyond necessary, regulations are morally justified by the values of care and collaboration as primary. The valuing of persons as persons must be the prime idea fueling state regulations of the market. The state and the economy are forever intrinsically intertwined—a pure free market economy having never in fact existed. And I can think of no greater justification for the reasoning behind regulation of the market economy by the state than care for the persons which it serves.

Regulated capitalism has taken many forms in the course of history and can be accomplished according to valuing care of persons in principle through regulations. As opposed to neoliberal ideology's falsifications, I posit that all forms of capitalism have included some form of regulation, and this is not antithetical to free and fair markets. Rather, it is ideology which guides what kind and how much regulation is decided in policies, and ideologies can change. Re-forming ideology to guide political economic policy around the care of the most vulnerable, marginalized and dependent first and foremost is both needful and possible. I propose therefore care and collaborative values as integral to the guided thinking for policies and regulations that will sustain our political economy, making them in fact more fair, more free.

¹¹ Nedelsky, *The Care Manifesto* symposium.

Purpose and Approach

The purpose of this study is a re-valuing of the respect and dignity of persons within political economy, employing the following questions:

- 1) How can we envision American political economy anew around care and collaboration--for mere survival, for creation of social goods, and for a more egalitarian economic prosperity?
- 2) What can we draw from socio-political-economic history to position this re-visioning?
- 3) And, what have dysfunctions of neoliberal thinking and women's care work illuminated to guide new visions of this thinking?

These central questions guide the analysis toward a reconstructive, re-valuing, re-thinking and practical policy driven vision based within an interpretive paradigm. The study uses an interdisciplinary approach, utilizing international political economy, theoretical interpretations, women's experiential knowledge, and comparative history to produce an interpretive argument proposing thinking that leads to the valuing of persons and resulting in egalitarian change for American political economic structure.

Neoliberal ideology, too long dominant, degrades democracy and the value accorded to persons. I propose a political discourse that accords value to persons in and of themselves. Not according to merit or holdings of wealth, but to personhood. Social insurance must provide for dependencies and value must be accorded to caring work as a contribution to others in society. Non-caring, non-productive work—i.e. the financial sector now comprising approximately 40% of American economy¹²--must be redistributed by income and wealth taxation and regulation according to the value of citizens' dependent needs. In the face of extreme inequality ever ascending its curve, approaching dangerous levels akin to pre-depression era, pre-fascist insurgencies, I propose that we have come to a point at which there is no alternative.

¹² Shapiro, Ian. *Lecture 19: Crisis, Crash and Response*. Yale University DeVane Lectures Power and Politics in Today's World, September 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4eUS8trd_yl.

One reason that the “greatest generation” was given its name is due to their valuing of the common good over individual materialist desires--self-discipline for the sake of others, giving of self in civic involvement and work, valuing mothering as essential caring work vital to economic structure, willingly contributing to government programs supporting children, family, community and the whole of society just as valuable as the individual agency. These values, practiced by many of us in rural America, should be championed, held up, and incorporated as moral backbone into policy. The greatest generation made care and collaboration principles into policy. And though the communist threat no longer spurs policies to match such principles, I believe that the crisis of pandemic in fact does.

Yes, a more sharply progressive income tax similar to 1960s rates should be again adopted—a proposition not at all outside of American norms since Americans invented progressive income tax. Yes, increased wealth and estate tax should be reinstituted to balance ever increasing inequalities that have fomented populism seeded with hateful division. Yes, these funds should be redistributed according to needs, education, social and health programs, beginning where the post-war contract was so successful and expanding to universal health care. Yes, care work must be reevaluated in philosophical and real monetary terms for women’s essential contributions of reproduction which not only birth, but also spiritually and psychologically build the next generation. And yes, financial regulation must be reinstated to reign in the casino style *Mad Money* markets which will inevitably implode again as Susan Strange so justified.¹³

But before and beyond these solutions from history, with policy creativity affirmed in a globalized economy, we must be reorienting our thinking to get there--toward a political economic ideology holistically inclusive of others, collaboratively valuing one and other so as to be valued and valuable ourselves. The normative argument is to adopt an ethic of care for the dignity of persons, a dignity of paid and unpaid work oriented towards need and the inescapable interdependence of being. Policies should match egalitarian principles of citizenship with great emphasis placed on women’s valuable co-creation abilities, rather than merely support corporate welfare and financial profits. How the pandemic underscores this need in a way never before made so obvious presents the

¹³ Strange, Susan. 1998. *Mad Money*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

timeliness, the urgency of revaluing our political-economic ideology to produce a more just structure for America at home and demonstrating responsible democratic leadership in the world.

Scope and Methods 1: Deliberately Accessible Scholarship

One hope and purpose in this writing is to be accessible. Here's why.

Economics in the neoliberal era is so often relegated to the economists--writing and analysis meant for themselves alone. Though mathematically brilliant, free market economist's scholarship is most often needlessly complex, devoid of moral valuation of personhood, and most often inaccessible to general readers. Similarly, political philosophers, though brilliant between themselves as they pursue "the conversation" in academic journals, lose the general public and relevance to lived experience.

Along the line of this motivation toward accessibility and direct public engagement in scholarship, we now see some significant examples--work incorporating active, visible deliberation. I'd point to a few who's written scholarship and deliberate online public presence stand out: Yale's Ian Shapiro in global politics, sharing his courses publicly and online in entirety; Harvard's Michael Sandel doing the same in publicizing philosophy courses made immediately relevant to discursive thought and policy; Elizabeth Anderson, a stalwart state university professor actively engaged political philosopher tackling questions of moral and political values in economic structure through specifically public deliberation; and Thomas Piketty, to which my study is so indebted, making his team's ongoing international economic dataset constantly publicly accessible. This latter is the superb example of a publicly accessible political economist, an originally straight and narrow economist, who has taken historical data, collaborative information, and scholarship to the public sphere for purposes of advancing the common good and democratic values. I follow this train of thought creation as intrinsically powerful.

Coming back to political science proper after 20 years, working in the worlds of community activism, of child co-creation and care, of freelance journalism, and public

service, I am pleasantly refreshed by this push towards public accessibility in the field. I applaud and join. When I left academia in 2000, one of my greatest criticisms of it was the old “ivory tower,” the lack of engagement with the “real” world, and the often insulated nature of political scientists communicating solely with one and other in academic journals read only by themselves. It struck me at the time that if the pursuit of applying principles to governance, development of thought and socio-political changes were in fact goals of political science (as they seemed to be among students and faculty around me), then engagement, activism and accessible writing should be primary in the discipline. We see in those I name and many more works incorporating active civic engagement in the classroom and in writing, promoting public deliberation, academia and action in concert.

A movement of academics towards public scholarship has long been needed and we see it now present. For Americans, young babes in the woods of international politics, nascent compared to cultures boasting millennia of political philosophy, publicly accessible scholarship is essential. Our founders knew (or feared) that an informed electorate was necessary (or dangerous) to democracy (or even the possibility). Here then I explicitly position myself as dangerously, necessarily, writing to engage, discuss, inform and incite changes.

Scope and Methods 2: Inquiry by Historical Forensics

The method I employ is an interrogation of doctrines and ideas dominating political economy in the U.S. correlated to (in)egalitarian changes as a historical, forensic exercise. The method is interdisciplinary, integrating macro-historical movements and events, political theory and political philosophy for the purpose of a value orientation to practical policy formation.

Particular attention is given to the oft invisible women in historical analysis, those working on the margins of society and in the economy of care unmeasured. In this way, women’s labor, paid and unpaid is a case study of the overall argument. Another

particular intention is the comparative lens, shining light on the U.S. system, as not existing within a vacuum of neoliberal thought but rather illustrative of international trends of ideology correlated to economic policies. Thus international scholarly analysis is widely utilized.

Scope and Methods 3: Time

An alternate title considered for this research was: “Nixon’s Dollar Float to Today’s Neoliberal Hegemony.” This phrasing accurately sums up the timeframe for this study, albeit in only a negative frame. Thus the title was scrapped for a more hopeful and solution oriented one, as what we think into existence is far more powerful in its positive form.

This inquiry limits a timeframe from essentially the beginning of the 40 year dominance of neoliberal policies, 1980, to the present, 2021 at the time of writing. But, particular note should be taken of the rise of neoliberalism seeded in power when Nixon unilaterally floated the dollar in 1971. The removal of the U.S. from Bretton-Woods, the inception of neoliberal think-tanks and political sway of thought away from Keynes towards Hyak all laid a foundation without which the Reagan-Thatcher coup de finance internationale could not have come. Also of note within the timeframe limit discussion are necessary historical references to major socioeconomic policies and events relevant throughout the 20th century.

Trends, events and ideologies of this timeframe will be examined and include the following summation. I will reference mappings of socioeconomic inequality from the dollar float to today with an explanation of emergent hyper-materialist society of the 1980s. The neoliberal ideological agenda, deregulations of finance, repeated tax cuts for the wealthy, tax haven legalization undercutting incentivization of reinvestments in American industry will be discussed. The wage stagnation of the past forty years at Congress’ refusal to raise the minimum wage to match levels of inflation, and relatedly, dismantling of the welfare state, as Clinton put it, “ending welfare as we know it,” and

the possibility of upward mobility dissolving with offshoring in “trade” agreements like NAFTA. The significance of neoliberal ideological consensus across party lines is relevant, particularly the repeal of the Glass-Steagall Act and the hegemony of TINA (“There Is No Alternative”) in the 1990s.¹⁴ Relevant as well is explicit corporate welfare instituted at the federal level, confirmed by the *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision defining corporations as persons. And overarching all, the marketization of society as the dominant policy solution orientation, including mass privatization of public goods and government assets.

Alongside these financial and economic trends map de-democratizing trends of citizen agency effectiveness as related, and include but are not limited to: the dissolution of labor unions and disenfranchisement of workers’ agency; social justice, agency and enfranchisement for women and minorities--somewhat successful then brutally stymied; the tea party movement and public emergence of white supremacy movements; the socio-political demonization of “others” with xenophobia, racism and claiming “moral majority” evangelical style Christianity while promoting its opposite; political rhetoric and media hoodwinking of a significant voting populous into an emotional politics while masking the macroeconomic policies that directly harm them; and the degradation of mothering as essential care work.

References to historical trends relevant to the neoliberal hoodwink of the past forty years must harken back to lessons learned from the free market “belle epoch,” industrial monopolies, and apex of income/wealth inequality prior to WWI and the subsequent

¹⁴ Antonio Vazquez-Arroyo gives a succinct summary in his article, “Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism: A Critical Juxtaposition.” He writes: “In the case of neoliberalism in the United States, in its coexistence with liberal democracy, the basis for this integrative consent—ranging from the exploitation of resentment to cultural wars— were found under the mantle of “the moral majority” in the 1980s, market populism in the 1990s, and now neoconservatism—all of these moving the terrain of contestation to the cultural field of power. Like neoliberals, neocons are mistrustful of democracy while seeking to rhetorically accommodate to it. And both neoconservatism and neoliberalism adhere to the tenets of liberal democracy. The latter’s anti-democratic history provides ample resources to invite such accommodations. Archetypical of this convergence is Francis Fukuyama. See, for instance, his *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 2002) and *America at the Crossroads* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006). 131. Fukuyama, Francis. 1992. *The end of history and the last man*. New York: Free Press.

system fallout. Lessons learned from the fallout included regulations of banks and investment houses, New Deal legislation, and organized labor enfranchisement.

Without these lessons there would have been no “golden era” of capitalism in the U.S., no international stability of the Bretton-Woods system, no welfare state picking up the pieces of the Great Depression, no equal rights amendments and 1960s educational and social programs. These forensic considerations are not exhaustive, but will prove necessary to the short political memory of my fellow Americans.

Central to my purpose is to expose assumptions, inconsistencies and fallacies in political economic ideology in order to produce a solution oriented framing drawing on lessons in historical knowledge. So assumptions and empty rhetoric must first be rooted out in order to address fallacies and re-vision political economy informed by mistakes and triumphs.

Highly important to this purpose, I seek to produce thinking that obliterates forms of domination. Such thinking seeks to produce policies that align with an ethic of care and collaboration and a logic of equity, freedom and overall societal survival. Particular emphasis will rest on points of economic policy that may correlate to the build up or degradation of democratization trends and prevalence or lack of a politics of care, for the common good, the poor, the “other,” the marginalized.

When so many reflecting today find that values of citizen agency, care and real representation are glaringly absent and it’s obvious to the average American majority—the masses of have nots whose real wages are lower than their parents’—we are left with a country that believes in democracy yet knows full well that it’s leadership is a financial oligarchy.

This state of affairs is precisely what American founders of government and builders of the free market fought to reject in old world European aristocracies.

Scope and Methods 4: Terms

Towards understanding of all these purposes, an operationalization of terms is in order.

Ideology shall be defined as a set of suppositions and beliefs around the best organization and values of a society.

Neoliberalism shall be defined as a socioeconomic ideology supposing capitalist markets to be natural, fair, and free, whose policies include removal of government interventions in the economy and regulations of financial mechanisms, while commodification and marketization of all aspects of society are justified.

Care shall be defined as the willed providing for, support of, and prioritizing of the best interest of others, both emotionally and materially.

Collaboration shall be defined as working in concert with, cooperating and empowering—or giving power to--as opposed to competing and dominating—or taking power over.

Each one of these terms is malleable. May these serve to be working definitions to begin. It is conceded that each term is saturated with normative values, but not lightly written, rather hard thought over time, experience and consideration. The term neoliberalism will be given much greater discussion, as its historicity, intricacies and slippery nature change in context. Most importantly perhaps to this writing, the term “care” and its operationalization is considered at length in the later chapters. As interdependent beings, care cannot be overestimated in importance for considerations of political economy.

Chapter 2

Untying the Neoliberal Knot: A Context in Literature

“It is then hardly surprising that the American imperial polity has exported liberal democracy and neoliberalism as part of the same package during the twentieth century, especially once the Cold War was over. Despite its antagonism with substantive democracy, the “truncated neoliberalism” that emerges out of the compromises made for its implementation needs democracy’s cloak of legitimacy as much as it needs to dilute its substance. The latter is precisely what liberal democracy provides. In Unger’s precise phrase: “relative democracy: democracy but not too much.”¹⁵

--Antonio Vazquez-Arroyo, “Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism”

Dominant neoliberal economic thinking is correlated to decreased democratic agency, with marginalized populations, notably women, people of color and the poor being the biggest losers. The violence done to women and dependents, with the state complicit is not to be ignored. The United States under neoliberal economic policies has transformed from a free market welfare state enhancing egalitarian prosperity and increased democratic agency during the postwar era, to a financially unregulated, corporate welfare state, degrading democratic representation and principles and the possibilities of socioeconomic egalitarianism during the last forty years.

My analysis gains perspective by examining neoliberal economic ideology, its policy results, and their correlation to decreased citizen agency and devaluation of citizen care, particularly that of the dependent, women and the marginalized. Research demonstrates that the neoliberal economic agenda has perpetuated the same devolutions of agency and care under different regimes internationally, sliding towards hypercapitalism or authoritarianism in some cases.¹⁶ Comparative data regarding income inequality and progressive tax reduction vis a vis political ideology will be discussed at length following. In the course of this thesis then, though concerned primarily with the

¹⁵ Vazquez-Arroyo, “Liberal Democracy,” 130.

¹⁶ See Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 2020.

American predicament, is an internationally relevant thesis in that the abandonment of Bretton Woods by the U.S. led the way transnationally, and within the IMF and World Bank not incidentally, towards an ideologically neoliberal policy agenda prevailing in the G7 and most of the world today.

The disintegration of the Postwar Contract, which began liberating and equalizing policy trends for the working class and those in need, and then devolved into hypercapitalism and hyper-materialism, is drenched in contradictions of historical lessons. There is a necessary explanation of dysfunctions, of how history bears out clear prescriptions in macroeconomic policy and their effects on wellbeing and social goods for the population. As critiques are manifold, more necessary is elucidating a new vision--a vision devoid of capitalist/communist dualism, a vision of an ethic of care and collaboration in thinking that I personally have experienced as deeply held by many Americans across political divides.

How Neoliberal Ideology and Democracy are Antithetical

The United States purports to be a democratic republic. We are characterized by unprecedented unipolar world power politically, militarily and economically since particularly the cold war's end. At the same time, macroeconomic neoliberal policies in the U.S. of the past forty years have systematically eroded the citizen agency and valuing personhood. Eroded alongside democracy are the values of care, of work and human dignity, the quality of thinking and deliberation, and the valuing of social goods. Of prime concern, overarching increases in income inequality correlated to specific financial deregulations, state assisted offshoring of corporations, defining corporations as persons under law, and dismantling of the welfare state have disenfranchised the majority of workers, most heavily burdening POCs, women, the poor, the vast middle class and most significantly--their dependents.

Further, correlations of neoliberal political ideology to dangerous anti-democratic trends are observed: the macroeconomic policy shifts away from the postwar settlement towards

a corporate welfare state have led to dangerous movements of thought in some groups. A politics of the “left behind” has emerged quite logically from such policies in the form of an alt-Right, both in America and other G7 states where the neoliberal political agenda has triumphed. Xenophobia, cultural backlash against women in gendered violence, publicly declared white supremacy and demonization of the Other in American political media culture are readily observable. The scapegoating of the marginalized and dependent has been real--and grossly misplaced as the alt-Right political leaders systematically disenfranchise their own voters.

An explanation of how macroeconomic policies are tied to these trends is essential for positive social change, recognizing the dignity of women and POCs in the US, but applies to marginalization of the Other in ideologically neoliberal states internationally as well. The rise, for instance, of alt-Right parties and outright fascists in European countries once destroyed by these forces should be grappled with in all seriousness. This study has direct relevance to their ideological foment. As Antonio Vazquez-Arroyo argues,

...the global hegemony of the combination of neoliberalism and liberal democracy is largely due to the convergence found in their liberal component: depoliticization and de-democratization, not popular participation, have been its leitmotif. If after 1945 there was a realignment of ideological forces in the North-Atlantic West that effectively moved nationalist politics squarely to the left, while the expansion of capitalism was increasingly cloaked in internationalism, the institutions of liberal democracy provided the domestic amalgamating mechanism for the expansion of capital, a conception of democracy that has always privileged the liberal moment of the pair over the democratic one.¹⁷

Further, Vazquez-Arroyo continues:

There is thus a conceptual and historical affinity between neoliberalism and liberal democracy insofar as neoliberalism is nourished by the depoliticized culture that liberal democracy not only breeds but also that is historically intrinsic to liberal democracy's rationality of power, to the compromise it represents on the part of the haves to pacify and accommodate the have-nots without radically changing their status or condition. Accordingly, neoliberalism not only has a political register and uses democracy to cloak itself with legitimacy. Rather, it requires the institutional framework that liberal

¹⁷ Vazquez-Arroyo, Antonio Y. (2008) 'Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism: A Critical Juxtaposition', *New Political Science*, 30:2, 128.

democracy has historically provided for it, as well as it fosters a sense of privatized responsibility whose fidelity is to order of freedom guaranteed by the market.¹⁸

Vazquez-Arroyo puts it well--that neoliberalism uses liberal democracy as a “cloak” for legitimization of power consolidation for the “haves” over the “have nots.”

De-democratization is the highly undesirable result of this covert cloaking.

The new dominance politics, replacing the modern state, resides in finance, with a direct transference of Realist assumptions from traditional governance of nation states to fluid movement of unregulated, untaxed, international capital. The subversion of democracy in most states across the globe has escalated in direct, significant proportion to deregulation of finance, speculations, and currencies. The antithetical relationship between neoliberal economic ideology and egalitarian agency can be seen through different lenses, so as to illuminate different dimensions of the problem. But it seems to me that through the eyes of women and our dependents, its illumination appears brightest. And for the “least among us,” domination through the cloak of legitimizing profits over persons, is not an acceptable state of affairs.

The old hard-boiled Realist assumption of competitive domination politics now has a cloak of legitimacy in its neoliberal guise, but it has not changed in its methods of operation between Athenian lords and banking executives of Goldman Sachs.

Dominance through profits at the expense of all else--all life, all philosophies, all beliefs, all governments, all persons, dominance itself is held highest in the high financial echelons now directing policy.

What is not accounted for by financiers and governance supporting them, and what is the great hope, is that the consent of the governed has not been achieved. There is an implied consent, given the current system has not been overthrown or drastically altered; there is an integrative consent, though it is based in distraction or acquiescence to political rhetoric dissociated from the neoliberal agenda. As Vazquez-Arroyo puts it:

In the case of neoliberalism in the United States, in its coexistence with liberal democracy, the basis for this integrative consent—ranging from the exploitation of

¹⁸ Vazquez-Arroyo, “Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism,” 129-130.

resentment to cultural wars— were found under the mantle of “the moral majority” in the 1980s, market populism in the 1990s, and now neoconservatism—all of these moving the terrain of contestation to the cultural field of power. Like neoliberals, neocons are mistrustful of democracy while seeking to rhetorically accommodate it. And both neoconservatism and neoliberalism adhere to the tenets of liberal democracy. The latter’s anti-democratic history provides ample resources to invite such accommodations. Archetypical of this convergence is Francis Fukuyama.¹⁹

The governed may have been distracted or temporarily hoodwinked by Reagan’s trickle down economics, by “moral majority” rhetoric, Obama’s promises of upward mobility, but these and others proved empty, sounding egalitarian and value laden but bearing no fruit. Actual consent to power of financially finagled oligarchy eludes governance. Neoliberal dominance cannot see consciousness of the governed; its materialism does devour and subjugate in the physical realm by its force-driven, hierarchical nature. But the neoliberal domination construct simply does not see the inherently more powerful thought forms, beliefs, and moral drives of self-giving empowerment. These power forms of *power to*, known eternally to women’s minds and hearts as we continue to care for others, are invisible to the cloaked neoliberal construct. These latter drives, as women birth, nurture, love, feed and educate the next generation, and dependents in need, cooperatively, collaboratively supersede domination constructs. These that sustain and undergird society do not consent.

The “invisible economy” so long written of in feminist political economy, the essential work of care that holds up society in times of expansion or crash regardless, this untracked *real* economy does not collapse when financial speculations fail. Its values, its strengths, derive from power outside dominance, competition and profits. The women, in the face of financial crashes, paid employment or not, school closures, child-care center closures, the women have and will care for the children, the elderly, the disabled, the least among us in terms of “production,” the most important among us for care in terms of value.

¹⁹ Vazquez-Arroyo. “Liberal Democracy” 131. He cites: The End of History and the Last Man. 2002. New York: The Free Press, and America at the Crossroads. 2006. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Positioning in Theory: Conundrums of Liberalism, Women's Experiential Knowledge, and Re-Aggregating Fields

Many thinkers believe the time is ripe for large scale political economic change in thinking and policy. Egalitarian re-visioning of society is being done across political science as a discipline; in interdisciplinary historical analysis, critical race theory, environmental political theory, feminisms a plenty, political philosophy and of course in political economy.

My analysis will draw on aspects of many valiant efforts, with the connecting thesis principle of an ethic of care being necessary for our very survival and key to correcting inequalitarian economic ideology and resulting policies. In much of the analysis, a marriage of political economic thought of egalitarian flavor and feminist political economy will be present. Revelations in the former courtesy of Thomas Piketty's work on inequality data correlated to ideological regimes are central, dissection of dysfunctions of international finance by Susan Strange are key, as are multiple women scholars' valuations of unpaid care work, such as Marilyn Waring and Nancy Folbre, and the powerful arguments of political philosophers such as Elizabeth Anderson and Michael Sandel for the insertion of moral values into political economic discourse. From Karl Polanyi to Joseph Stiglitz to Wendy Brown, and the forgotten women's work holding up the real economy in between, in effect, I am proposing a synthesis of these thinkers with that of historical lessons of dismal failures and enlightened collaborations to light a path of revisioning.

Let us begin by examining the term *neoliberalism*. Wendy Brown pegs it well operationally as naming "a historically specific economic and political reaction against Keynesianism and democratic socialism, as well as a more generalized practice of 'economizing' spheres and activities heretofore governed by other tables of value."²⁰ This is all accurate given examination of historical socio economic phenomena herein. Yet as a term, neoliberalism is more slippery than Brown's description. It has been said by Noam Chomsky to be the great misnomer of current political discourse, being neither

²⁰ Brown, Wendy. *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*. 2015, Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: Zone Books, 21.

“new” nor operation “liberal.”²¹ Liberalism as political philosophy is trapped in a globalized prison of its own making, economically and governmentally. Promising individual liberty and egalitarianism by destruction of aristocracy, liberalism has at the onset of the twenty first century reproduced a financial oligarchy overarching so-called democracies, defying or ignoring basic premises of the human life cycle. America is the pinnacle example, behaving across the globe as a sort of new Rome.²²

Regardless of its inconsistencies by definition, neoliberalism does operationalize as a socioeconomic dominating ideology that places market principles and profits ahead of all other values, and must be contended with as such. As described eloquently by Antonio Vasquez-Arroyo:

Liberal democracy has provided a depoliticized framework that nurtures neoliberalism, while providing it with a cloak of legitimacy. Stated somewhat differently, the historical trajectory of liberal democracy, as a theory and as a practice of power, betrays an antidemocratic tendency that leads to depoliticization and has quelled the democratic politics that once gave credence to it, thus paving the way for the rise of neoliberalism.²³

Is neoliberal ideology a natural outgrowth of Liberalism as Vasquez-Arroyo here suggests, or a perversion of its tenets? I argue it is not a case of either/or, but both/and.

Patrick Deneen, a self identifying conservative, writes in *Why Liberalism Failed* that neoliberalism is the inevitable culmination of the liberal ideology. In his 2018 text, he analyzes liberalism as a set of contradictions, championing equal rights while fostering economic inequality, professing consent as its justification but discouraging civic

²¹ Chomsky, Noam and Marv Waterstone. *Consequences of capitalism : manufacturing discontent and resistance*. 2021, London: Hamish Hamilton.

²² This statement of the U.S. operating as a sort of “new Rome” is not meant as a pithy comment but a rather serious one. In the later 1990s, graduate students around me in international relations of many political persuasions were in agreement on this point, which has become all the more salient in the last two decades. As when the Roman Empire connected and subsumed overlapping polities dominated the western world, today’s America subsumes power, overlaps polities politically and economically. American dominance on the world stage has the added distinction of acting imperial while professing democratic principles. The “new Rome” America is a masking of itself, under neoliberal ideology its “free” and “fair” economic dominance in fact a shielding of financial aristocracy defiant of borders and regulations.

²³ Vasquez-Arroyo, Antonio Y. (2008) 'Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism: A Critical Juxtaposition', *New Political Science*, 30:2, 127.

engagement in favor of privatism, promoting extreme individualism but creating the largest scaled state structure in history.²⁴

The term “liberal democracy” is widely used to describe the regime that today is regarded by most in the West as the sole legitimate form of political organization. “Liberalism” thus adjectivally coexists with the noun “democracy,” apparently giving pride of place to the more ancient regime form in which the people rule. However, the oft-used phrase achieves something rather different from its apparent meaning: the adjective not only modifies “democracy” but proposes a redefinition of the ancient regime into its effective opposite...²⁵

Deneen argues that liberalism’s apparent success in America in particular for some time was due to the allegiances to authorities outside the self--country, religious beliefs, family, liberal arts or free education.²⁶ With breakdowns in loyalties to authorities over the past 40 years and the concurrent rise of neoliberal consensus in governance, the actual success of Liberal ideology has become blatantly apparent: autonomous individualism, apathy towards philosophy of the good life, a demise in responsibility outside the self, and non-engagement with community. For me, it is fascinating to note that, though their paths of logic diverge significantly, both a self-identified conservative such as Deneen and self-identified leftist such as Chomsky offer similar critiques of American liberalism culminating in neoliberal ideology that degrades citizen agency.

Is Deneen correct that political liberalism is responsible for the crumbling democracy, lack of actual representation of citizens, and the slide into big finance oligarchy? Is political liberalism a project culminating in neoliberal economic policies favoring markets over the common goods--and even differing individual goods?

My answer is yes to a significant degree, due to inadequacies of logic and dearth of values infusing conceptions of liberty and justice. I say partly, because liberalism is not actually at stake in the tax funded bailouts of big business and banks. In this I contend Chomsky is correct that the U.S. can be rightly characterized as a corporate “nanny

²⁴ Deneen, Patrick J. *Why Liberalism Failed*, 2018, New Haven: Yale University Press.

²⁵ Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 154.

²⁶ Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed*, 1-20.

state.”²⁷ Bank bail-outs fly in the face of all liberal conceptions of free market economy. This repeated consensus structure progressively devolving into corporate oligarchy sanctioned by law (repeated Fed bailouts, legalized foreign tax havens, *Citizens United*, etc.) is quite accurately a planned capitalist state for the benefit of some dominating others, antithetical to laissez faire operations. The current corporate welfare state is precisely opposite of liberal democracy and free market economy.

But partly also, and equally important, the conception of individual liberty on which the state bases laws of autonomy is deeply flawed and inaccurate in conception of “the individual.” John Rawls’s conceptions of equality, justice and individual liberty behind a veil of ignorance is highly illustrative of the liberal state’s blindness to its own inadequacies.²⁸ Rawls, arguably the most influential American liberal political theorist of the 20th century, proposed famously elegant principles that would be reached through mutual agreement from an original position of equality and justice as fairness. Behind his conceptual “veil of ignorance,” each individual has an equal right to basic liberties, and socioeconomic inequalities are to be arranged according to everyone's advantage. This sounds beautifully simple, yet my issue is that this autonomous individuation behind the veil ignores the basic difference in kind between the sexes, thus inescapable dependencies of being for women and children through the procreation process (women being mentioned but once in even his revised *Theory of Justice*).²⁹ The single passage addressing sexual difference of the 500 plus page work devoted to liberal justice states: Distinctions [here referencing freely acknowledged inequalities of fixed natural characteristics] based on sex are of this type, and so are those depending upon race and culture. Thus if, say, men are favored in the assignment of basic rights, this inequality is justified by the difference principle (in the general interpretation) only if it is to the advantage of women and acceptable from their standpoint.

There are several problems with these statements. But for the purposes of this thesis, the logic implies that a chosen favoring of rights to men is to be based on women’s advantage

²⁷ Chomsky, Noam and Marv Waterstone, *Consequences of Capitalism: Manufacturing Discontent and Resistance* 2021, London: Hamish Hamilton.

²⁸ Rawls, John. 1990. *A Theory of Justice: The Revised Edition*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

²⁹ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 84.

and acquiescence. It continues to imply, as does the rest of Rawls's arguments, that women occupy an original position of autonomous individuation to make determinations of justice. Can this conception ever be so given our natural ability to create new persons within our own bodies, one individual becoming intrinsically two? Can acknowledging a natural difference in kind between the sexes be glossed over by simply stating an equal original position of equality? No, unfortunately Rawls' oversight is the same mistake made by second-wave feminism: women cannot become elevated in dignity, in kind, or in equality to men by making over women into autonomously individuated men. The essential nature of our human lives, which are all grown from a state of total and utter dependence--far from independent autonomy--and end in the same condition is ignored nearly in totality by the liberal state's conception of the individual citizen. Neither the free market, nor the liberal state, nor many theorists adequately address realities of need on the scale of inescapable dependencies.

Where are the women behind Rawls' well intentioned liberal conception of a veil of ignorance? Our merits or talents, according to the conception of arbitrary assignment, are immeasurable in our abilities to reproduce the species. Likewise, in our inborn ability to naturally feed the dependent next generations with our bodies, we are in possession of talents and merit beyond the other half. Simultaneously, these merits make us physically vulnerable as well, dependent on some forms of care ourselves--from the tiger outside the cave, from the international military threat, from potential poverty that would threaten our bodies and our dependents. Autonomy? Individualism? These concepts in Rawls' formulation are but Plato's shadows in the cave, when light is shown on the everyday procreation and co-creation of women's work and care. Interdependence is the true reality of each individual entering and exiting society, thus interdependence and the care and collaboration that sustains our necessary interconnectedness. It is freedom within interdependence that must be deliberated.

It is here that ethicists such as Elizabeth Anderson, feminist political economists like Nancy Folbre, women's historical and practical experiences, and child development research collide in formation of knowledge that is instructive. The extreme individualism

of our current dominant neoliberal ideology systematically ignores the formative years of life, the possible years of special needs and the end years. Though Deneen's conservative theorizing is provocative in several directions, the professed individual autonomy of liberalism crumbles in my analysis at a far earlier base starting point, the creation and sustaining of life itself. Individual autonomy is simply not a reality for any being--it is a privileged temporary position of a propertied white middle aged male for sure, but he only gets there by being fed, loved, educated and cleaned innumerable times in his state of total dependence.

Why has individual autonomy in theory been assumed? Why have our inescapable dependencies beginning life, during and ending it been ignored in political economy? The simple answer, which may in fact be the best one, is that women's contribution to creating and sustaining life has been conveniently ignored.

Carol Pateman wrote *The Sexual Contract* in 1988, taking on contract theorists in the Western philosophical tradition, to point directly and brutally to this ignorance. The gist of her intricate argument, intuitively obvious within women's shared experience, is that the liberal state's basis of legitimacy in its social contract with citizens assumes autonomous, free and equal individuals, which excludes half the population.³⁰ The assumed definition a priori state social contract of women as dominated sexual beings excludes them from the entire equation. Pateman wrote of how social contract theory champions equality of individuals, but it is presupposed by sexual contract which perpetuates domination.

I would extrapolate that women are not just excluded from the social contract, but political economy of the liberal tradition is defined in opposition to the active care work of women. Whether one considers Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau or Rawls--each and every one born of and suckled by a woman--the sexual reproduction of women, in all its emotional, mysterious, messy and essential care work, is absent, subsumed, taken for granted. The independence of these men's thinking presupposes their interdependence on women in a highly "personal is political" picture. Ok, so it's well established, the

³⁰ Pateman, Carol. 1988. *The Sexual Contract*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

creation, sustenance, and care necessary to our very being has been ignored. We women for whom all are dependent for life, should be elevated in the social contract, at least out of invisibility and certainly out of subservience to domination. Fine, shall we now cease complaining of this vast ignorance, and let us insert the value.

Operationally what does this look like? Ahead, I will consider insertion of interdependence of being and the elevation of care work. I'll look at women's experiences, political economist's scholarship on the subject, critiques of classical political economy, materialism and meritocracy.

Central to this purpose in my critique of current policies and thought is an explicit rejection of all forms of domination. This critique necessarily examines different dominating forms as they have proliferated popular political and economic thought: scientism, narrow Darwinism, neoliberalism, extreme materialism--all must be exposed for their limited and prejudicial religiosity in our systems and thinking. But at a more base level, a re-aggregation of fields of thought are in order to do so. This position deserves some extrapolation.

Chapter 3

For the Power of Ideas

Ideas are the vehicle of real power, the realm where the potentialities of becoming and the creation of the future reside. Thus our ideas, our narratives, our choices of thinking, then our beliefs and resulting ideologies, are where positive possible changes reside.

An important premise, of which I've become convinced on many levels of analysis, is that ideas are the vehicle of real power. From different lenses of knowledge we have evidence of this, though I doubt the power of ideas is fully realized. From neurological studies, we know that thoughts have frequencies. From theoretical physics, we know that the subject affects and potentially changes the object of study.³¹ From political culture and media studies, we know that a well run propaganda story can move whole nations against previously held beliefs into actions previously unimagined.³² From public policy studies, we know that a well constructed narrative can change the course of history in political economic policy.³³ Ideas inhabit the realm where the potentialities of becoming and the creation of the future reside. All changes in ideology inspiring policy begin with the potentiality of an idea. Thus our ideas, our narratives, our choices of thinking, then our beliefs and resulting ideologies, are where positive possible changes reside.

For a Re-integration of Political Philosophy and Economics

³¹ It is well documented from decades of research in molecular physics that the interconnected relationship between researcher and the object researched leads to outcomes from that relation, i.e., molecular change occurs based on the physicist's intent, questions, status, etc. Similarly, we know from sports medicine, that as an athlete imagines an event, neurons fire from the brain to muscle groups precisely in synch with the athlete's actual

³² The well run Nazi propaganda machine is the obvious example we're quick to point out. But what comes readily to mind in the U.S. are Bush Jr.'s idea of WMDs in Iraq, and the idea he propagated that repealing the estate tax would provide poor southern black farmers a legacy of wealth. Both ideas, though false, caused policy upheaval.

³³ Reagan's constructed welfare queen imagery, of a large woman of color pulling up to the social services office in a limo comes to mind.

Political Theory, Economics, Philosophy--these distinct fields were not originally segregated in academia because their interrelatedness and interdependence are necessary to definition and actual operation. I.e., an economic theory cannot be disaggregated from the values on which it rests, for economics is not an objectively pure science as recent predominant ideology supposes, but rather, all prescriptions contain beliefs, cultural assumptions, and moral judgments. My analysis is thus in line with classical political philosophy, not attempting to disaggregate these fields, but rather to re-think them holistically with moral valuation at the forefront of thinking.

The fracturing of economics from political philosophy is central to the problems at hand. Their reintegration is vital to upping the value of persons within markets over the marketization of persons. Piketty's most recent text, *Capital and Ideology*, elucidates this purpose. He critiques the autonomization of economics as a discipline, separating itself in supposed superiority for a synthetic objectivity and technical prowess.³⁴ He states: "In reality, it is only by combining economic, historical, sociological, cultural, and political approaches that progress in our understanding of socioeconomic phenomena becomes possible."³⁵ It is of prime importance that the predominating disaggregation of economics from social sciences and philosophy be exposed for its own ideological inconsistencies and moral judgments. Additionally, Piketty points out that citizens and journalists too often acquiesce to economics as a natural, neutral science of pure knowledge, rather than expressing democratic agency.³⁶ A re-aggregation of political philosophy to economics is paramount to addressing necessary dependencies, inescapable needs of our human condition, and here care and collaborative thinking become possible.

The separation of scientific theory from moral philosophy has dominated the social sciences in the last century--in the name of objective Truth. Though one may find some virtue in the attempt, it is inherently faulty. As critical political theorists as well as theoretical physicists of the last fifty years have amply demonstrated, one's values necessarily affect research, even at the point of one's choice of inquiry. The separation is

³⁴ Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 1039.

³⁵ Ibid., 1040.

³⁶ Ibid., 1041.

thus arbitrary, and in sum total has been harmful to our conceptions of the common good and to political economic theory.

The work of political philosopher Elizabeth Anderson, specifically her discussion of the false fact/value dichotomy is here illuminating to my research perspective. Anderson is a proponent of value affirmation within the sciences, including economics, and of scientific recognition within political philosophy. In a symposium on the history and philosophy of the social sciences in 2016 at the University of Michigan³⁷ where Anderson teaches, her presentation, “How Social Science Can and Ought to be Value Laden,” she stated, “arguments that science is value free are actually supposing that values are science free...but is that supposition supposed to be a fact or a value? As a value that’s completely insane...the proper value judgement is that values are science laden...factual and evaluative judgements then do not occupy separate hermetically sealed spheres.”³⁸ This brings the line of reasoning to re-integration of political philosophy and economics. We must accept economics is no “pure” or neutral science and that a moral component is inherent to any economic ideology. We must then take the further step to actively accept and conscientiously promote a moral infusion of political economy. With this writing, I argue that change in thought, value systems and the political-economy at the operational level around care is the critical solution orientation. A normative position of this study is that change at the level of thought is most creatively powerful, for any concrete reality must be first imagined, explored in thinking and ultimately believed possible before manifesting as an operational change. It is the power of ideas and beliefs that ultimately affect positive change.

Along this line of reasoning, Piketty states in *Capital and Ideology*, editing Marx’ famous assertion from the *Manifesto*: “The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of the struggle of ideologies and the quest for justice.”³⁹ This argument stands its ground,

³⁷ Anderson, Elizabeth. “How Social Science Can and Ought to be Value Laden,” Symposium at University of Michigan on September 29, 2016. The symposium examined the history and philosophy of the social sciences, bringing together lines of inquiry that often exist separately. Symposium participants included philosophers, historians, and sociologists. What is shared by the disciplines and methods represented in the symposium was a turn inward, to treat intellectuals, disciplines, institutions, and systems of ideas in the social sciences as objects of research in themselves.

³⁸ Anderson, “How Social Science,” 2016.

³⁹ Piketty, 2020, *Capital and Ideology*, 1035.

for class struggle alone, though significant, ultimately is a materialist reduction of the human condition. Our ideas, as creative formulations of the possible, matter immensely, and indeed are the formulation of future reality. Piketty writes that his 2020 book has but one goal: “to enable citizens to reclaim possession of economic and historical knowledge.”⁴⁰

Strong support for the position comes as well from the work of Anderson, a champion of the power of ideas to effect change. Anderson’s most cited article is her 1999 piece, “What is the point of equality?” She argues: “The proper negative aim of egalitarian justice is not to eliminate the impact of brute luck from human affairs, but to end oppression, which by definition is socially imposed. Its proper positive aim is not to ensure that everyone gets what they morally deserve, but to create a community in which people stand in relations of equality to others.”⁴¹

Arguing against “luck egalitarianism” prevalent in political egalitarian theorists, claiming redistribution based on lucky or unlucky life circumstances, and tracing their position (wrongly Anderson claims) to John Rawls’ formulation of distributive justice, Anderson proposes the following idea of democratic equality:

In seeking the construction of a community of equals, democratic equality integrates principles of distribution with the expressive demands of equal respect. Democratic equality guarantees all law-abiding citizens effective access to the social conditions of their freedom at all times. It justifies the distributions required to secure this guarantee by appealing to the obligations of citizens in a democratic state. In such a state, citizens make claims on one another in virtue of their equality, not their inferiority, to others. Because the fundamental aim of citizens in constructing a state is to secure everyone's freedom, democratic equality's principles of distribution neither presume to tell people how to use their opportunities nor attempt to judge how responsible people are for choices that lead to unfortunate outcomes. Instead, it avoids bankruptcy at the hands of the imprudent by limiting the range of goods provided collectively and expecting individuals to take personal responsibility for the other goods in their possession.”⁴²

It should be noted that the thinking here places primacy on persons as persons in *respect* of their equality, not inferiority--an *explicitly active value judgement*, and I am in

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1041.

⁴¹ Elizabeth S. Anderson. “What is the point of equality?” *Ethics*, Vol. 109, No. 2 (Jan., 1999), The University of Chicago Press, 288.

⁴² Anderson, “What’s the point,” 289.

agreement. Freedoms, as Anderson describes them, from financial oligarchy dissolving citizen agency, should be primary. Exposing dominant thinking around neoliberal economics, and championing how we should value the dignity of persons, work, and care more greatly than market mechanisms, are crucial to the proposition.

I make a normative argument for increasing the value accorded to care of persons through collaboration, in which change to dominant thinking is primary—but this normativity garners support from the empirical, in that historical evidence supports such a change, by examination of trends in macroeconomic policy informing critical operationalizing of sociopolitical change. Therefore, my arguments methodologically are both philosophically/value driven and empirical/historical within the context of political economy.

This study does not argue for an end to the free market. On the contrary, I argue for its tempering and regulation. As Adam Smith described free market economies at their inception, capitalism cannot even exist without the notably present regulation of government. Smith believed free markets depended on government upholding Natural Law, under which he included the granting of patents and copyrights to encourage inventions and new ideas, provision of public works such as roads and bridges, and perhaps most importantly the enforcement of contracts for the good of the citizenry and its “fair” and “free” economy.⁴³ Joining the classical Smith at the other end of the political spectrum is Karl Polanyi, who, in his increasingly read work *The Great Transformation* (1944) referenced from self proclaimed conservatives to social democrats (though notably sidelined by liberals), showed that a pure market economy is a phantasm. Vazquez-Arroyo accurately writes,

as a tradition of critics has famously explained, from Marx and Engels to Karl Polanyi’s *The Great Transformation* (1944), there has never been a pure market economy. Stated differently, the formal separation of the economic and the political notwithstanding, the functioning of a capitalist economy has relied on Statist institutional frameworks and systems of coercion.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Smith, Adam. 1776. *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. London: Oxford University Press.

⁴⁴ Vazquez-Arroyo, 135.

Further, “it is worth remembering that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a similar pure market experiment (to the neoliberalism of today) had catastrophic results.”⁴⁵ The point is quite simple: the free market is a myth.

Government regulation is necessary for the operation of capitalism, and economic policy within capitalism is always political. The upshot of this fact and the deliberate refusal of it by the Washington Consensus is that the American government has neglected its primary duty to regulate markets according to its social contract with citizens to preserve representation and protect citizens from tyranny, in the neoliberal form having become financial oligarchy.

As I think about the history of political economy over the last hundred years in the United States, what has been learned through effects of different state capitalist policies, democratizing effects and their opposite, it is blatant that two principles will fail to exclusively solve social, economic and political ills alone, as definitive, end-all principles: marketization and competition. The market is a given, competition inherent to it, but devoid of all other moral values of good governance, democratic freedom and the common good, the principles of marketization and competition have become tyrannical.

In these principles narrowly defined by neoliberal ideology, we can see the application of an oversimplified Darwinist infused thinking applied to conceptions of persons and society in the last forty years. There is an explicit presumption that competition which gets operationalized as domination, as taking power over others, is “natural,” that forms of domination will further human progress, that markets are free and solve problems fairly according to some law of evolution.

But unchecked free market capitalism is not synonymous with human evolution. Whether we look at classical free market economics in theory or examine actual actions by the state in markets, the assumptions are false. The overall effects of these assumptions in policy have stagnated economic and political agency, created social ills across the majority of the population, and could be argued to be an intellectual devolution

⁴⁵ Author’s insert to Vazquez-Arroyo again citing Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001) in “Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism,” 127.

of deception. The state of late has operated as a corporate welfare agency while touting “free market” principles, fair play competition has been purposely whittled away into monopolies, and neither marketization of society nor competition mindsets serve solutions to large problems facing this United States--the wealthiest, arguably most powerful country in human history.

Changing the Narrative

Of ideas, our valuing of care for one and other, collaborative thinking, and empowerment or “power to” thinking fueling belief and action, are what sustain society.

This is in direct opposition to “power over” or dominance thinking. First note, this position is directly contrary to prevalent, popular belief in America, fueled by the opposing thought and heavily propagandized by neoliberal ideology, that competition alone creates prosperity and economic stability. And further, dominance is an acceptable form of competition. In finance, in sex, in medicine, in education. This, a narrowly materialist social-Darwinism is preeminent, domination thought is dominant--support of a cut-throat competitive market mentality with no government regulation or overarching values of being besides commodified value.

Despite our best intentions, our values usually derive from our thinking which in turn derive from a narrative. The story we tell ourselves, or the narrative that dominates, can be an emotion filled image, a rhetorical phantasm or can be developed by observable facts, and rigorously chosen values.

Wendy Brown’s book, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*, analyzes the current socio economic predicament well, and the mass malaise of misunderstandings in thinking around it. Brown writes, “neoliberalism, a peculiar form of reason that configures all aspects of existence in economic terms, is quietly undoing basic elements

of democracy.”⁴⁶ Considering the multiplicity of democratic governmental forms and definitions in theory, Brown proposed and I accede, that:

Accepting the open and contestable signification of democracy is essential....because I want to release democracy from containment by any particular form while insisting on its value in connoting political self-rule by the people, whoever the people are. In this, democracy stands opposed not only to tyranny and dictatorship, fascism or totalitarianism, aristocracy, plutocracy or corporatocracy, but also to a contemporary phenomenon in which rule transmutes into governance and management in the order that neoliberal rationality is bringing about.⁴⁷

In *Undoing the Demos*, she points not to growth measurements over time but to stagnation due to increasing concentration of profit at top, governmental structural support for maintaining it, increasing inequality, lack of social mobility, all leading, she believes, to an eventual pseudo-feudal system of status quo maintenance for only the highest elites.⁴⁸ Her analysis agrees with my observations that neoliberal policies since the 80s in America have accumulated to a structural assault on democracy, and thus our citizen agency and abilities to care for one and other. Further, Brown observes a destruction of the basis of modern thought in individual and collective will, given to nationalism, xenophobia, and other hatreds, maintaining an elite, white, male power exclusiveness in the bipartisan U.S. system and multi-party systems of Europe at the expense of democratic history and ecological needs.⁴⁹ Vazquez-Arroyo, reflecting on Brown’s work: Few contemporary Anglo-American political theorists have taken full measure of this intersection or paid any critical attention to neoliberalism as a form of power. The most notable exception here is Wendy Brown...Brown offers coruscating analyses of the forms of the political rationalities that inform neoliberalism and liberal democracy, as well as the relationship between neoliberalism and neoconservatism, and the de-democratizing tendencies characterizing both rationalities of power.⁵⁰

I observe the same and concur, though I have come to these conclusions from a different position, that of an invisible “care worker” with much of my production outside measures of the G.D.P. I concur, having left a Ph.D. program in political science, as a single mother working the last two decades of neoliberalism’s rein to grow our own food

⁴⁶ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 17

⁴⁷ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*, 20.

⁴⁸ Brown, *Undoing the Demos*.

⁴⁹ Brown. *Undoing the Demos*.

⁵⁰ Vazquez-Arroyo, “Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism,” 129.

outside the industrial complex, live a simple life of community connectedness and sharing of resources in cooperation. And I conclude from these experiences that cooperative, common good principles, re-valuing the dignity of persons, of work, and of the finite supporting environment within which we operate a globalized economy are necessary on a time sensitive level of need as never before in human history.

Chapter 4

Of Free and Fair Markets:

Their Regulation and Valuing Persons They Serve

Neoliberal capitalism is, then, an economic order concerned only with profits, growth and international competitiveness. It normalises endemic care deficits and abject failures to care at every level by positing them as necessary collateral damage on the road to market oriented reforms and policies. While enabling certain modes of market-mediated and commoditised care, neoliberalism seriously undermines all forms of care and caring that do not serve its agenda of profit extraction for the few.⁵¹

--*The Care Manifesto*, 2020

Free market capitalist societies are preeminent, the United States being the apex of unregulated free market economies. But historical examination amply demonstrates that for societies to sustain free and fair markets, state regulation of finance and economic structure are necessary. This thesis suggests that beyond necessary, regulations are justified by the valuing of persons as persons as the primary idea behind regulations of the market. The state and the economy are forever intrinsically intertwined, and a pure market economy is but a phantom theory, not an existent reality. As I can think of no greater justification for the reasoning behind regulation of the market economy by the state than care for the persons which it serves, I propose that for the sustenance of American society, state regulation of finance and economic structure are a) necessary, and b) justified by the values of care and collaboration as primary.

The Neoliberal Rise: Historical Forensics of Regulated Capitalism and the Politics of Care

Most analysts peg the beginning of neoliberal financial deregulation and the marketization of society around 1980 with the election of Ronald Reagan in the U.S., his neoliberal comrade Margaret Thatcher having come to office in the U.K. in 1978. This

⁵¹ Chatzidakis, et. al., *The Care Manifesto*, 8.

mark is important, given the Reagan administration's legalization of tax havens, systematic disenfranchisement of trade unions, tax slashing for high income earners, and structural support with congressional insistence on minimum wage stagnation. It is quite right, as most scholars assert, that neoliberal hegemony took hold beginning in the Reagan-Thatcher era.

But this peg misses a crucial historical juncture in the narrative: Nixon floating the dollar. When Richard Nixon unilaterally removed the U.S. currency from the international fixed exchange in 1971, neoliberal dominance reared its head, and a backward slide into hyper-materialism, devaluing of persons in favor of profits began. The Treasury decision of total non-intervention in exchange rates removed the dollar in 1972 from the international stability of Bretton-Woods, which had specifically excluded bankers and been hard forged by democratically elected leaders and political economists. This was a move for the upper echelons of financial wealth and against citizen agency. As Susan Strange put it, "It was not just that Nixon deliberately abolished the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system - though often referred to euphemistically as the 'collapse' of the system, it was actually more like a deliberate act of sabotage."⁵² Close on the heels of the dollar float was the U.S. decision to refuse to deal with OPEC producers and Henry Kissinger's inspired stockpile and stonewalling of oil producing states. I would point also to Nixon's "Southern strategy" which was a strategic adoption of a systematic, neoliberal economic push, a racially prejudicial agenda, anti-ERA politicking, and a cover-all claim to a "moral majority" rhetoric by the Republican party beginning a backlash against democratizing forces. All these phenomena count big in the devolution into neoliberal hegemony overriding foundational moral and political values. They paved the way of marketizing society, allowing Reagan-Thatcher neoliberal action in policy.

The massive shift towards neoliberal ideology of both parties began with these macro-socio economic movements. Their acceleration in policy power took hold under Reagan, but continued under the neoliberal Clinton administration, "ending welfare as we know it," and complete repeal of Glass-Steagall act, just to name some big ones. With Clinton and the Democrats at the helm, financial regulation and the interests of the

⁵² Strange, *Mad Money*, 6.

working class were effectively abandoned. Amidst the tech bubble of the mid-late 1990s and passing of the Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999, markets were given free reign despite the warnings of the 1920s-30s when our government allowed the same. Strange again, “the Group of Seven, while aware of the dangers, did nothing to rein in the hedge funds that were behind the currency speculation of 1995. Yet markets - and the immense vested interests behind them who want to maintain the status quo - have simply outgrown governments’ ability to regulate them.”⁵³ That is, doing nothing, absent the *desire and will* to regulate them. And herein lies the problem, as Keynes accurately analyzed in the 1930s, “it was not capitalism so much as the capitalists, and more particularly the financial markets, that were to blame...The outstanding faults of the economic society in which we live are its failure to provide full employment and its arbitrary and inequitable distribution of income and wealth.”⁵⁴ Federal policy must therefore incentivize investment for job creation and stability, which it did under the Keynesian economic paradigm, prior to the Reagan administration’s creation of offshore tax havens, and Clinton administration’s accelerating the offshoring of jobs and multinationals under the guise of globalization as “progress.”

The volatility of markets, at citizens expense and for the benefit of financiers increasing wealth inequality, has been knowingly allowed. Writing in 1999, Strange stated that,

Governments of states have less control over their economies and societies than they had ten, twenty or thirty years ago....the organisation of credit in the world economy has been revolutionised by new ways of marketing credit, new credit instruments and new kinds of financial dealing like derivatives. Governments have had no control over these innovations...Yet states had once asserted rights to control and regulate innovation, even to forbid the export of technology beyond their frontiers...Taxation...is another big area where states have lost control, where their spending power is beyond their own control, determined by the whims of foreign bondholders and by the agility of their business leaders in using tax havens to pay less.⁵⁵

These arguments, fully flushed out by data from Strange and others, support my point regarding a neoliberal stranglehold across party lines through the 1990s. Did the government obtain more control over markets ten years later? Indeed not, as the 2008

⁵³ Strange, *Mad Money*, 17.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.

crash showed us. And was the lesson learned by Alan Greenspan's admission of mistakes at that time, by Larry Summer's previous insistence that the controls of Glass-Steagall be repealed? Indeed not, for the Obama administration's bailouts of banks "too big to fail" did bail them out, providing corporate welfare rather than following principles of free market economy. The heart of the phenomenon here is an absence moral principles. One of Strange's major conclusions,

concerns moral contamination. There has always been some moral ambiguity about financial dealing. The essence of profit in financial business is often information not available to others. Insider trading is everywhere condemned - and everywhere practiced....Firms that have access to large amounts of credit and that make such large profits can afford to bribe politicians and officials as well as to reward employees. Bribery and corruption in politics are not at all new. It is the scale and extent of it that have risen, along with the domination of finance over the real economy.⁵⁶

That scale and extent continued to rise following the 1990s tech and stock bubble. The supremacy of market solution thinking to societal problems continued under George W. Bush with further financial deregulation and estate tax repeal amounting to welfare for the rich. It continued under Obama with bailouts of big finance in response to the 2008 crisis, to the burden of middle and working class citizens. Tax cuts for the wealthy and financial deregulation and removal of financial oversight reached their apex under Trump. The neoliberal ideology and its policies have infused both major American parties for the last forty years, destructive to democratic agency and economic mobility that is distinctly non-partisan. Resulting backlashes we witness now include a politics of the left behind, the rise of populism, xenophobia, sexism and demonization of the Other in many forms as a politics of the left behind in a confused citizenry has resulted.

Decades before the 2008 crash, subsequent recession, rise of populism and cultural backlash against women and motherhood, there were concise predictors of the irresponsible and ill-advised economic policies that would lead to such a crash. History was plainly indicative that free reign international finance, lacking regulation separating banking from financial speculation, was dangerous for individual consumers and to the stability of large markets. Marketizing society, or expecting free markets to "naturally"

⁵⁶ Strange, *Mad Money*, 181.

and “fairly” resolve economic down-slides and produce social goods, had not proved true in historical data either.

Celebrated international political economists such as Susan Strange, with her seminal texts *Casino Capitalism* and *Mad Money* twenty years ago, predicted the inevitable collapse of international capital by its very structure, with an almost humorous irony. Strange’s historical economic analyses penetrated understanding of the structural volatility of credit and financial markets in the 1980s and 1990s, pointing out the grave consequences for egalitarian governance. She comments in 1999:

governments of states have less control over their economies and societies than they had ten, twenty or thirty years ago. This is still disputed by realist writers in politics and by liberal writers in economics; both are biased in their view of what is by their ideological perspectives of what out to be. But both are wrong....the organization of credit in the world economy has been revolutionised by new ways of marketing credit, new credit instruments and new kinds of financial dealing like derivatives. Governments have no control over these innovations.⁵⁷

Less discussed in the literature, but basically crucial to understanding, is the volatility of the international monetary system--initiated by the U.S. and I propose the initiating enablement of neoliberal ideological dominance. Strange again: “It was not just that Nixon deliberately abolished the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system--though often referred to euphemistically as the ‘collapse’ of the system, it was actually more like a deliberate act of sabotage.”⁵⁸ I agree with Strange emphatically, as opposed to much of the political economy literature current, that such sabotage of monetary stability did not begin with the Reagan/Thatcher years of neoliberal takeover, but dates to Nixon floating the dollar. Already under the guise of a “moral majority” reacting to civil rights democratization forces, Nixon’s unilateral dollar float enabled neoliberal financiers sitting at the ready since the post-war settlement, making money “mad” as Strange rightly puts it, a commodity in itself, circumventing egalitarian gains in the U.S. and the international monetary stability of decades so hard fought for.

⁵⁷ Strange, *Mad Money*, 180.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

Even without the 2008 financial crisis driven by pieced out, high risk mortgage trading in the U.S., economists other than Strange saw the evidence of markets out of control of governance and private financial interests taking control of government policies and the benefits of globalization. Of this, Canadian-born political economist Geoffrey Underhill wrote in 1997:

This would matter little if it were not for the enormity of the stake for states and their societies at large. The metamorphosis of a series of closed, cartelised, nationally controlled and often segmented financial systems into a transnationally segmented and marketised space characterized by a high degree of capital volatility and mobility is one of the great and unplanned transformations of the twentieth century.⁵⁹

Of Underhill's comments I take issue only with the term "unplanned" as it will be made clear by the historical analysis of this study that the U.S. government and others quite purposefully gave away power to private financial actors with acts such as tax haven creation, financial deregulation, and transnational corporate welfare. Need we wonder why now massive populations of voters left and right feel ignored or left behind as a result?

Popular political philosophers like Michael Sandel, with *Democracy's Discontent*, also published twenty years hence, predicted alt-right, populist uprisings in response to the effects of neoliberal policies.⁶⁰ Sandel writes:

The inability of the reigning political agenda to address the erosion of self government and community reflects the impoverished conceptions of citizenship and freedom implicit in our public life. The procedural republic that has unfolded over the past half century can now be seen as an epic experiment in the claims of liberal as against republican political thought. Our present predicament lends weight to the republican claim that liberty cannot be detached from the self-government and the virtues that sustain it.⁶¹

Indeed, the Trump era played out Sandel's populist uprising predictions to the letter.

Actions such as financial deregulation and outright sellout policy responses to globalized markets and big bank failures at taxpayer expense did not go unnoticed, but left citizens

⁵⁹ Underhill, Geoffrey, 1997. "Private markets and public responsibility in the global system: conflict and cooperation in transnational banking and securities regulations", in Underhill, G.R.D., ed., *The New World Order in International Finance*, Basingstoke, Macmillan, 42.

⁶⁰ Sandel, Michael J. *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy*, 1996.

⁶¹ Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent*, 323.

lived at begin ignored. Sandel in the philosophy camp, like Strange in IPE, is not a radical outlier. Their predictions were concretely derived from the empirical evidence.

These did not seem at all alien concepts for me at the time, as the income inequality numbers of the late 1990s, wealth and welfare state distribution patterns began mapping to 1920s economic indicators. When I left academia temporarily in 2000, overwhelmed by the structurally blockaded TINA consensus of neoliberalism, I felt stymied by the refusal of political economists in both the academy and in our federal government to question, think critically or observe the lessons of history. Sandel, in the political philosophy camp, and Strange, in the international political economy realm, were far from anarchists, far from Marxist revolutionaries. When I say they were not radical outliers, I mean to imply that their writing was quite squarely situated in establishment academe, and their evidence for predicting inevitable economic crashes and political upheaval responding to democratic agency cut down was soundly established. That is, the context within literature for my arguments even twenty years ago was present. But the dominant narrative of neoliberal economics was so strong that these voices were not heeded.

Of that narrative, still currently guiding economic policies among major powers and particularly by within U.S. politics, Piketty writes this year:

In today's societies, these justificatory narratives comprise themes of property, entrepreneurship, and meritocracy: modern inequality is said to be just because it is the result of a freely chosen process in which everyone enjoys equal access to the market and to property and automatically benefits from the wealth accumulated by the wealthiest individuals, who are also the most enterprising, deserving, and useful.⁶²

This is an accurate assessment highlighting the inadequacies of neoliberal thinking. Dominating both political parties in the U.S. since the early 1980s, the political economic picture only deepened its contradictions into the early decades of the 21st century, with the 2008 crash and the federal government's corporate welfare response. Economic inequality rose according to policies (high income and wealth tax reduction coupled with further financial deregulation) and continues rising, with the U.S. topping the charts among democratized states.

⁶² Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 1.

Common Beliefs of Great Irony

There is a great irony in commonly held American citizens' beliefs I have encountered. I hear this opinion widely, most often from those "baby boomers" whose stable childhoods under a single income earner household and nearly free college years reaped the rewards of the post-war era policies; those who speak of the 'golden era' 1950s-60s tend also think it was the freest era of free market capitalism.⁶³ The opposite is true. It is the post-war era that contained policies of high degree regulations for banks and investment houses; it is this golden era of capitalism that boasted the highest progressive taxation of upper income earners. And it is no accident that this era of Keynesian economic planning produced the greatest upward mobility for the greatest number of citizens, the highest sustained growth rates in GDP, and the highest degree of economic stability over the last century. Not unrelated, the degree of democratizing trends in culture and legal precedents also increased.

Strong Keynesian economic structuring in the wake of the Great Depression through the 1940s supported democratization processes and political-economic egalitarian justice for the masses via U.S. policy leadership yielded domestic and international common goods. These include the postwar settlement establishing the American welfare state, progressive income taxation, institutionally affirmed collective worker's rights, continued financial regulation born in the depression years, and the Bretton Woods system which was hugely significant to economic prosperity and decreased income inequalities. The 1960s and early 70s saw a massive democratization process for marginalized groups, significantly for blacks and women in terms of social upward mobility and legal rights. This was on top of a couple solid decades of economic policies that sought to enfranchise labor unions

⁶³ Fascinating to me, the examples of individuals in my life who speak of the golden era as the 1940s-1970s being the last "free market" America cross party lines and ideologies. So for instance, a retired police officer, staunch republican, against all forms of taxation; a self-proclaimed democratic liberal with low income, working class parents, now successful legal professional. The commonality among these and other examples, who vote different parties, hold differing ideologies and religions, is that they came of age and profession in the Bretton-Woods, Keynesian era stability that empowered the working and middle classes by careful regulation and provided education, but they ascribe their financial successes to their own personal merits, discounting or ignorant of the policies that empowered them.

and the working class, reduce poverty, and decrease income and wealth inequality under progressive taxation and regulations of finance that had saved the economy in the post-depression era.

When citizens express longing for this golden era of economic stability and freedom, they are (unknowingly sometimes) expressing a desire for regulated financial markets, progressive taxation, and social welfare programs. They are longing for the international stability of fixed currencies and financial oversight between states. They are intuiting (unwittingly sometimes) the need for care and cooperation as overarching principles within policies, hard learned from the causes of the Great Depression and world wars.

When Bill Clinton said famously “it’s the economy stupid” he was right, but he failed to put his money where his mouth was unfortunately. Clinton accurately assessed--and won many votes-- with his rhetoric that American jobs were being shipped off for cheaper labor lacking essential worker rights and environmental regulations, and then helped ship them with NAFTA. He accurately assessed the American worker’s needs, the racial and sexual inequity of the nation, but then “ended welfare as we know it” and repealed the Glass-Steagall Act, plunging the U.S. financial markets into pre-Depression instability. A neoliberal par excellence with the rhetoric of a union boss, Clinton paved the way for increased income inequality and the 2008 crash, no less significantly than the Reagan administration before.

When one considers Barack Obama, one finds many similarities to the democratic presidency of Jimmy Carter: personally idealistic, outwardly morally upstanding (i.e. true to their own Christian value systems in word and deed). The Obama presidency sought to present a rhetoric of care and collaborative principles discussed here, yet proved inexperienced in matters of federal governance, international maneuvering and political economy, Obama not only caved to forces of neoliberal ideologues on the national and international scenes, he became a pawn of financial interests. When pressed by Wall Street following the 2008 crash caused by high risk mortgages, broken up and and traded in dangerous speculation schemes, Obama consciously chose corporate welfare handouts to the big banks that had gambled citizens homes away, rather than bailing out

homeowners, who had no say in the risky policy allowances that allowed the crash. Neoliberal ideology tightened its stranglehold on this democratic president as it had on Clinton, Bush Sr. and Jr. and Reagan before them.

Following 2008, of course increased income and wealth inequality were the results--perpetuating worse off conditions for the marginalized, women and people of color. Neoliberal power given to profits over people won the day across party lines through all administrations since Reagan, regardless of nascent idealisms, and falsehoods perpetuated by neoliberal ideology are the core of this problem.

Here, illustrating the sharp rise in income inequality following Reagan's election in 1980, is Piketty's data assessment of income inequality, by top the 10% of income earners in the U.S. from 1910-2010.⁶⁴



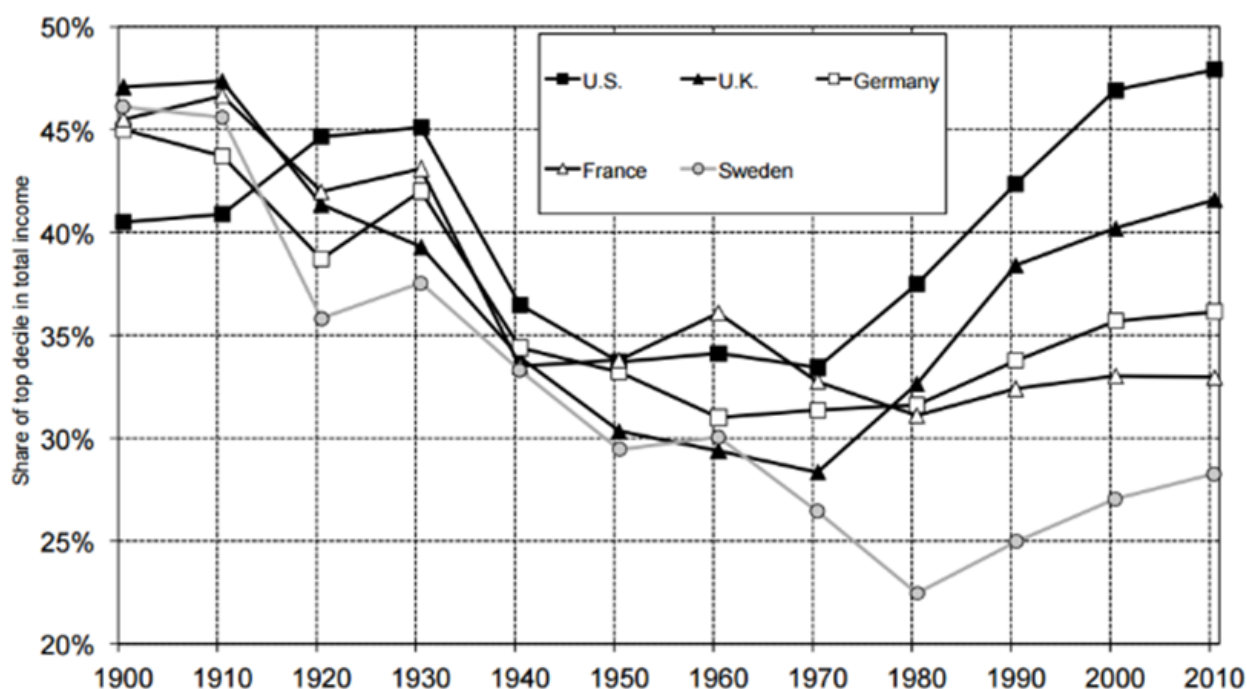
Note in this table the leveling off of income inequality following the major policy initiatives of separating banking from speculative investment, the Glass-Steagall Act under the Roosevelt administration, and progressive income taxation of the already very rich, under both Democratic and Republican presidents. The late 1930s through the

⁶⁴ Piketty, Thomas. 2013. *Capitalism in the 21st Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

1970s are also notable for the economically revitalizing, equalizing, and empowering policies incentivizing reinvestments in industry creating jobs, rather than market speculation. And internationally, Bretton Woods created a stabilizing environment in this period in which currency speculators were also stymied from gambling citizen assets and jobs.

And here, Piketty's research team data set on the same vis a vis similarly situated democratized states. Note the U.S. represents the extremity of increased income inequality beginning in 1980 continuing through both Democrat and Republican administrations, and rivaled only by the U.K.:⁶⁵

The top decile income share: Europe and the U.S., 1900-2010



A recent *New York Times* article discussing the recent Biden administration tax proposals illustrates both the resistance to progressive taxation historically pursued and how the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

dominant neoliberal ideology characterizes any tax hike on the wealthy as “radical.”

David Leonhardt writes in the *Times*,

The Tax Foundation has said that Biden wants to raise the capital gains tax to “highs not seen since the 1920s.” Suzanne Clark of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce called the same plan “outrageous.” Jay Timmons of the National Association of Manufacturers called the proposed increase in the corporate tax rate ‘archaic.’⁶⁶

Leonhardt sites analysis by Gabriel Zucman of the University of California, Berkeley, whose chart I include here showing the total federal rate in the U.S. for “both the top 0.01 percent of earners (who currently make about \$28 million a year on average) and the top 1 percent of earners (who make \$1.4 million on average).”⁶⁷ He writes:

The data is a reminder of just how far taxes on the wealthy have fallen over the past 70 years. In the decades just after World War II, many corporations paid about half of their profits in federal taxes. (Shareholders, who are disproportionately affluent, effectively pay those taxes). Today, corporate taxes are only about one-fourth as large, as a share of G.D.P., as they were in the 1950s and ’60s.... Whether you like Biden’s plan or dislike it, *it is not radical*. For that reason, it is highly unlikely to have the harmful effects on economic growth that its critics are claiming. Remember: In the 1990s, the last time tax rates were as high as the ones Biden has proposed, the economy boomed. It also grew rapidly after World War II, when tax rates were higher yet.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Leonhardt, David. May 4, 2021. “Biden’s Modest Tax Plan” in The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/04/briefing/biden-tax-plan-wealthy.html>.

⁶⁷ The New York Times. Source: Gabriel Zucman of the University of California, Berkeley

⁶⁸ David Leonhardt, “A Modest Tax Proposal” May 4, 2021, *The New York Times*.

Total Federal Tax Rates for the Past Century

Averages for top earners, by income bracket



Includes income taxes as well as estate, corporate, investment and other taxes

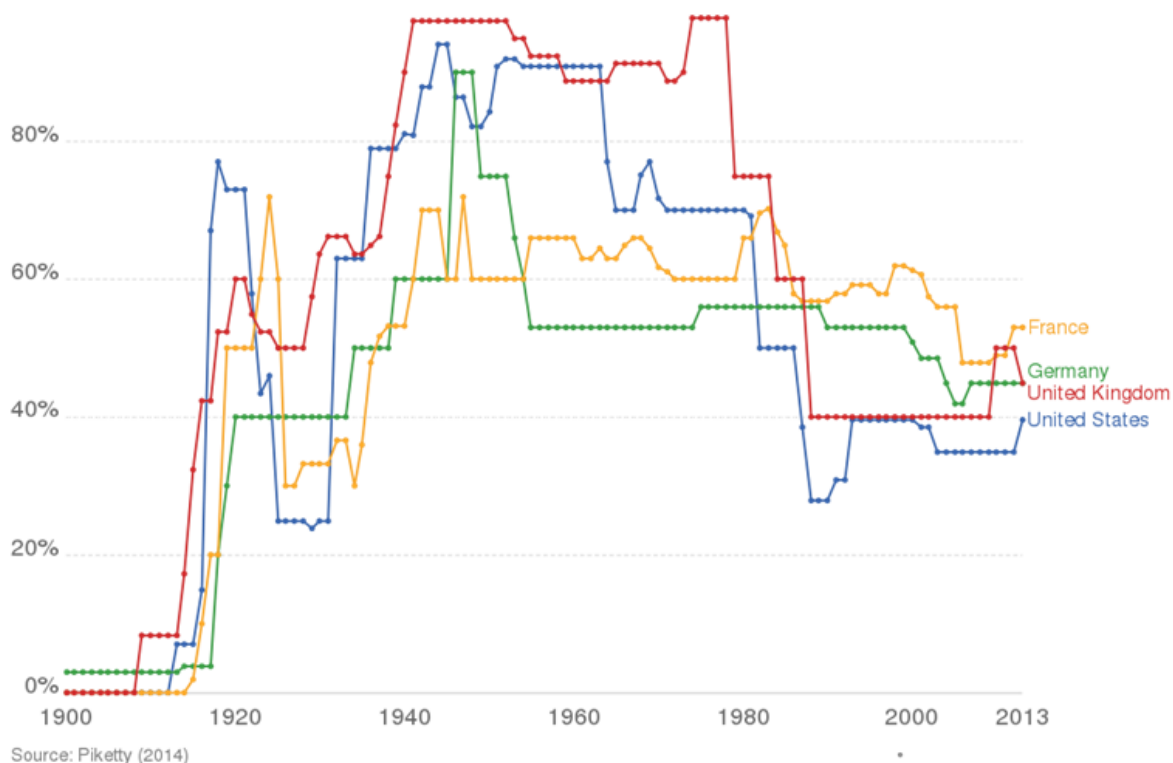
This current mainstream journalism paints a clear picture. We see here the effects of neoliberal ideology skewing outright false perspectives onto policy proposals, while the data of history shines a light of truth. Far from radical, as Leonhardt points out, Biden's proposals are extremely modest when viewed through the lens of economic history. They are neither socialist nor sharply redistributive, but barely inching toward corrective of an ever increasing extreme inequality quotient.

Piketty's more extensive historical data on taxation of the very wealthy makes the point of comparison in this table:⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty First Century*.

Top marginal income tax rate

Top marginal tax rate of the income tax (i.e. the maximum rate of taxation applied to the highest part of income)



The top marginal tax rate comparison shows the U.S. leading the way in progressive taxation of highest income earners correlated to the times of WWI, the Great Depression, WWII and the concurrent labor movement's influence on federal policy. The data shows decline of distributive taxation from the 1980s to the present, also with the U.S. leading the trend. These concise tax trends map specifically to ideological regime change, as Piketty's research amply demonstrates.

Piketty's primary thesis on the subject in his 2020 book, *Capital and Ideology*, is that a change in dominant ideology can effectively change policies effecting inequality, set in relational understanding to particular events, historical crises, and institutions.⁷⁰ The essential aspects of his analyses in both *Capital in the Twenty First Century* (2013) and *Capital and Ideology* (2020) is critical. *Capital in the Twenty First Century* made an enormous impression on political economic scholarship around the world by

⁷⁰ Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, 41.

demonstrating that within capitalist systems, r (return on investments or capital) will always increase more rapidly than g (growth in the labor economy).⁷¹ Put in simple, concrete terms, this means that those citizens with significant wealth will always grow their wealth exponentially faster through investments than the real economy grows. Rates of return on investment outdoes GDP every time--regardless of labor productivity. And though this was believed within IPE, it was not yet proved, and Piketty's data acquisition and analysis conclusively proved this.

The significance for free market societies is that Piketty and his team of researchers showed, using data sets larger than any previously employed in comparative political economy, that the resulting inequalities of income and wealth by $r > g$ were inevitable. Government interventions in the forms of taxation, financial regulations, monetary policy, interest rates, labor regulation and other mechanisms have overall effects on the level of inequality for a given state. However, the fact of $r > g$ remains a reality regardless, and thus any change or manipulation to the extent of inequality is a political--or moral--issue.⁷² For political science, the upshot of such a finding is that inevitable increasing economic inequalities in capitalist systems pose significant challenges to the operations of democracy and a just society.

It is important to note that prior to Piketty's research, it was popularly believed within political economy that the growth of the labor economy (g) would eventually catch up to capital growth (r), based on the famed work of Simon Kuznets (1955), who hypothesized industrial capitalism first sees an increase in income inequality, followed by a leveling off, then a decrease, nullifying the "problem" of inequality in capitalist systems.⁷³ Piketty's superior, far more extensive data, mining previously untouched tax records, over a far longer historical trajectory, has demonstrated the widely accepted Kuznet's curve to be incorrect in that it only applied to a very limited historical period.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty First Century*.

⁷² Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty First Century*.

⁷³ Simon Kuznets, "Economic Growth and Income Inequality," in *American Economic Review* 65 (1955), 1-28.

⁷⁴ Particular note should be given to the fact that Kuznet's data covered the short time frame of 1930-1950, an era of financial deregulation and progressive taxation. Kuznets, 1955, "Economic Growth."

We might well ask, why does inequality matter? Though obvious to some and not important to others, based on one's ideological bent, the question of why inequality matters at all is a legitimate one. Inequality matters because as it rises to extreme levels, which happens without any government regulation of free markets as $r > g$ demonstrates, effects include social ills such as stagnant poverty, eradication of citizen agency, mass civil unrest, labor disenfranchisement, xenophobic populism, a breakdown in access to education, and the erasure of any chance at upward mobility for the poor and middle classes. Income and wealth inequality ever increasing map to these trends currently as they did in the 1920s-30s.

For the record, I do not argue against free markets or capitalism as such, nor for complete equality in income/wealth. But what can be ascertained from the historical analysis is that there are many organizational forms of the free market state, that tempering free markets with financial regulations and progressive taxation towards greater socioeconomic equality yield common goods, increased productivity and peace.

Piketty's data supports this position. Building more extensively on his work in *Capital in the Twenty First Century*, in terms of historical scope (tackling pre-capitalism to the present) and international scope (correcting Western bias of the first book to include far more non-anglo states), *Capital and Ideology* presents the relationships between political regime ideologies and measurements of socioeconomic inequality. His primary thesis is that a change in dominant ideology can effectively change policies effecting inequality, set in relational understanding to particular events, historical crises, and institutions.⁷⁵

Ultimately, the purposes within *Capitalism and Ideology* are solution oriented towards creating a new ideology to serve society greater justice today. Piketty uses a multi-disciplinary approach to first deconstruct the hyper-capitalist narrative that emerged from the 1980s onward, a fatalistic perspective driven by some truth but many falsehoods which has demonized the poor and needy, and subsequently to produce a new narrative based in historical evidence—a “new universalistic egalitarian narrative, a new ideology of equality, social ownership, education, and knowledge and power sharing.”⁷⁶ He finds

⁷⁵ Piketty, 2020, *Capital and Ideology*, 41.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 3.

in data analysis a conclusion that many of us intuit in our observations of human history, that “what made economic development and human progress possible was the struggle for equality and education and not the sanctification of property, stability, or inequality.”⁷⁷

But, social democratic ideology of the 20th century is lacking in his estimation, reflecting that “among social democracy’s shortcomings were its failure to develop a more just idea of property, its inability to confront the challenge of inequality in higher education, and its lack of a theory of transnational redistribution,”⁷⁸ policy inconsistency, and “too little sharing of experiences across countries.”⁷⁹ Current identity politics of today is lacking as well, as he finds it is fueled “by the lack of a persuasive internationalist egalitarian platform—in other words, by the absence of a truly credible social federalism.”⁸⁰

Counter to the dominant narrative that inequality is based in “nature” Piketty finds it is in fact constructed by the ideologies controlling or swaying policy and beliefs. To illustrate contradictions within the narrative, he points not only to data but to cultures saturated in media, print and films legitimating and glorifying billionaires.⁸¹ So to construct a superior ideology based in greater equality, education, ownership and immigration, Piketty concludes that a new participatory ideology and social federalism is in order. To this, he cautions: “given the profound transformation of political cleavage structures and voting patterns since 1980, a new egalitarian coalition is unlikely to emerge in the absence of a radical redefinition of its intellectual, ideological and programmatic basis.”⁸²

This radical redefinition proposes a just property regime resting on: “first, authentic power sharing and voting rights within firms,” taking his example structures from the Nordic states and Germany, second, “a strongly progressive tax on property, the proceeds of which would finance capital grants to every young adult...towards permanent circulation of wealth” and third, educational and fiscal justice guaranteed by citizen

⁷⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 576.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 47.

⁸¹ His analysis of the film *Destiny and Desire* (2008) is a brilliant reflection on the current dominant narrative’s destructive tendencies to individuals and society. Piketty, 2020, *Capital and Ideology*, 714.

⁸² Ibid., 41.

oversight.⁸³ The progressive income taxes proposed are not outside the realm of history, as they are similar to levels we saw in the US under the Eisenhower administration.⁸⁴ In total, Piketty's "tax triptych" encompasses progressive income tax and wealth or property tax, and redistributed inheritances, with an additional carbon emissions tax.⁸⁵

Importantly, he also calls for information transparency of financial assets between states in public registry, rather than the current, unaccountable, private intermediaries.⁸⁶

Piketty's work, the debunking of Kuznets' inequality curve, and the mass consumerist society of America devaluing mother's care of children and our environment all suggest to me the following: growth is not a good in itself. Perhaps for ever increasing profits at the top of ownership, economic growth is a good, but these profits do not translate into good for all, or even most.⁸⁷

Growth in profits at the top 1% is not statistically growth for all, thus a reframing of economic goods in order. Gabriella Kuetting's article, "Discourses of degrowth: New value systems for global environmental governance" illuminates this position, arguing beyond my call for sustainable economy, she calls for degrowth. Kuetting writes of her aim and others' to "outline the following indicators as guiding principles for a degrowth society: cap and share, zero interest rates, non-debt money and regional currencies, new forms of property and work-sharing. Substantively, (the) approach aims to take the profit motive out of most of the economy and thus to reduce the growth potential (and increase more equitable social relations)."⁸⁸ Kuetting cites:

"the 2015 winner of Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences, Angus Deaton, highlights that more wealth does not result in more happiness or wellbeing beyond a certain (quite low) point – you certainly do not have to be part of the top 1% or even top 30% to feel more happiness. Victor and Rosenbluth state that environmental and resource constraints make continued economic growth an unrealistic option, that economic growth is not really necessary for developed countries to sustain their welfare and that economic growth's

⁸³ Ibid., 47.

⁸⁴ Proposed rates cap at about 80-90% for the top decile.

⁸⁵ Piketty, 2020, *Capital and Ideology*, 983.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 991.

⁸⁷ As previously discussed, see also Reagan's trickle down economics not in fact trickling down, Obama's upward mobility argument ending in still stagnant wages.

⁸⁸ Kuetting, Gabriella and Lucy Ford. 2020. "Discourses of degrowth: New value systems for global environmental governance" *ephemera: theory and politics in organization* V 20(4), 12.

side effects ultimately outweigh its supposed benefits. This argument is mirrored forcefully by researchers critical of growth in general (Jackson, 2009). Poverty and uneven distribution are a manifestation of this argument (Zieschank and Dieffenbacher.⁸⁹

When measurements of wellbeing do not increase over a certain threshold of wealth, when growth in the real economy has kept under 2% during neoliberalism's reign (as opposed to the 4-6% rates of the post-war era) while wages remain stagnant, when growth itself has proved harm to the environment in which we live, is it not time for revisioning political economy as degrowth, as Kuetting suggests, or at least egalitarian sustenance? I agree with Kuetting conceptually that focus on growth does not serve us, rather focus on sustenance--necessitating cooperative thinking rather than competitive thinking--will lead to survival and well being.

In reviewing literature discussions, such as above, there is far more that may be discussed, but overall I'm struck by the basic question: Can we summarize simply that with the dominant neoliberal narrative controlling thought and policies, Hayek has recently, wrongfully triumphed over Keynes? Political economist Friedrich von Hayek was author of several books including the famed *Road to Serfdom*, and is often credited with fathering current neoliberal thinking. At the time of writing, he was less successful in his persuasion of governance than his intellectual opponent John Maynard Keynes, who is largely credited with fathering the international monetary system and stabilizing political economic paradigm of the prosperous post-war era. Though as anti-authoritarian as Keynes when both were writing during the heyday of fascism and totalitarian socialism, Hayek proposed strict laissez faire solutions whereas Keynes favored government interventions in markets, fixed currencies, interest rate manipulations and social welfare programs. It must be clear to the reader by this point that this researcher falls in the Keynesian camp of opinion, whose positions are well known in political economy.

Hayek's powerful permeation of thought into the American polity at present has been well noted. Of Hayek and the neoliberal's view of democracy, Vazquez-Arroyo writes: "Its function was that of legitimizing transitions of power. In rituals of power, like

⁸⁹ Ibid., 12.

elections, the demos tacitly legitimizes these transitions of power. Yet it never becomes an actor that explicitly decides outcomes, or even directly authorizes them.”⁹⁰

But a word on Hayek and how his positions do not rightly fit today’s economic environment. Neoliberals point to Hayek’s market solutions to societal ills, but he himself critiqued monopoly dominance (currently out of control, i.e., digital tech companies and financial markets) that his “free” and “fair” market would have hypothetically corrected. From Hayek’s text, *The Constitution of Liberty*: “The argument for liberty is not an argument against organization, which is one of the most powerful tools human reason can employ, but an argument against all exclusive, privileged, monopolistic organization, against the use of coercion to prevent others from doing better.”⁹¹ In other words, by the verbiage of this champion of laissez faire capitalism himself, the current “exclusive, privileged, monopolistic” financier’s dominance of governance and society should be categorically jettisoned. From the father of neoliberalism’s words, financial markets should not be privileged, banks should not be bailed, coercion of governance by finance should be categorically disallowed. The current neoliberal ideologues in operation, touting themselves as for purely free markets, thus do not even follow their own purposes but contradicts them. The government interventions and regulations Keynes championed do win the argument, for themselves and against the backdrop of political economic history since his writings--if nothing else than to reconstruct and sustain free, fair markets as well as democratic agency.

Given this brief dive into past literature, at the time of this writing in 2021, with the highly revealing aspects of pandemic further shining light on failures in financial systems, social insurance systems, and government’s inadequacies in addressing these as well as moral and socioeconomic discontents of the majority, it is my belief that a window of productive critique and solution orientation now appears.

American Neoliberalism--Hegemonic But Certainly No Vacuum

⁹⁰ Vazquez-Arroyo. “Liberal Democracy and Neoliberalism” 132.

⁹¹ Hayek, Friedrich von. 1960. *The Constitution of Liberty*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 37.

The U.S. case illustrates what I argue as a clear trend of neoliberal ideology correlated to decreased democratic agency, stagnation for the majority of the population, a host of social ills, and the devaluing of women and care work associated with this trend. But this situation does not exist in a vacuum, the trend correlations are not specific to the U.S. political economy or some cultural particularity, but rather they represent a trend internationally in the last forty years. Here, a glance back to the 21st century turn and the most all-inclusive, intricate, and excellent comparative socioeconomic study I am aware of, Goran Therborn's *European Modernity and Beyond: The Trajectory of European Societies 1945-2000* is illuminating of the "stealth" nature of neoliberalism's ascendance. Therborn, a Swedish analytical sociologist of international prominence, in 1999, reflected on the sub-field of property and labour rights:

The interwoven social relations of property, of workplace organization, the distribution of knowledge and skills, accumulation patterns, collective interest organization -- what in English is generally known as 'industrial relations' -- labour law and labour markets are usually carved up between different disciplines and networks of specialists....With regard to capital-labour, capital-society relations, we still have to grope for analytical dimensions and for their available indicators.⁹²

In short, the very questions Therborn asked in his vast, socioeconomic, comparative survey of the Western world in 1999, as well as the questions I ask here, lacked sufficient data for answering 20 years ago. But let me suggest that Strange's theoretical predilections, published just after Therborn's words, and Piketty's data collections ten years hence fill in much of the gaps. In the meantime however, what Therborn referred to as the wide distribution of study over field specializations⁹³ and lack of analytical indicators, as well as, I would add, analysts turning a blind eye to neoliberalism's stealth dominance, contributed significantly to neoliberal ideology going nearly unquestioned, in Eastern and Western Europe, the Pacific Rim and the United States. Therborn is clear that with the indicators available at the 21st century turn, comparatively the United States was at the height of absoluteness and extensiveness of private property under law.⁹⁴

⁹² Therborn, *European modernity*, 111.

⁹³ This I previously dealt with in my section arguing for a re-aggregation of fields of scholarship.

⁹⁴ Therborn, *European modernity*, 112.

The Washington Consensus took neoliberal hegemony global following the end of the cold war, as though a return to pre-1929 financial policies were automatically justified by Berlin's crumbling wall. Vazquez-Arroyo explains the historicity of the socio-political-economic of this phenomenon succinctly:

In their coupling, neoliberalism and liberal democracy have become important mechanisms in the consolidation of the idea of the free world and a world market: an electoralist conception of capitalist democracy that provided a contrast to socialist or even social variants, in Europe and beyond. Of course, the paradox of this hegemony is that while democracy has spread, its substance is increasingly thinner. *This paradox, however, reveals not the impossibility of substantive democracy to spread; instead, what it reveals are the structural limitations of democracy in its liberal form under capitalism.* Actually, the current global spread of liberal democracy is hardly the upshot of political mobilization. It is the outcome of economic imperatives imposed from above.⁹⁵

Since the Iron Curtain came down, a dangerous assumption was propagated under the Washington Consensus, championed by Clinton administration neoliberal ideology, camouflaged by a short lived 1990s market bubble. Assuming that the economic--deregulation, free trade, privatization of state assets and U.S. dominated IMF and WTO policies--should precede democratization, or that democratizing forces would grow naturally from financialization, American style, rapid capitalization of Eastern Europe was imposed. And for the European Union, with its great hope of sustained peace and collaborative diplomacy, this actualized in financialization eclipsing all other social values. Writing of this important transformative period in his all encompassing historical dissection, *European Modernity and Beyond*, Therborn again:

To be successful and important, the European Union needs to be a project of social construction, not just a marketplace nor a museum. In the values of public collectivism and family individualism, and in the experiences, achievements and organizations of the labour movement, of Christian Democracy, and of enlightened conservatism, Europe has the resources for the construction of a European society. Whether they will be used, I am unable to tell.⁹⁶

Unfortunately from around 1999 to today, the E.U. has opted for increasingly neoliberal financialization and deregulation. Imposed austerity, increasing dominance of the central bank and volatility of currency speculations is the result. From Susan Strange's analysis of international political economy in the post war era up to 2000, there is ample evidence

⁹⁵ Vazquez-Arroyo, "Liberal Democracy," 128 (emphasis added by author).

⁹⁶ Therborn, *European Modernity*, 364.

of the precarity and serious dangers of the international monetary and credit systems, under the auspices of the Washington Consensus adopted by the E.U. and most everywhere. From floating currencies, deregulation of investment banks, risky derivatives trading, to resultant overspeculation, the precarity was dire in the 90s. A moment before the turn of the century Strange wrote:

...of the old concept of narrow banking -- of making a category of fully regulated, fully supported large banks that in return for their guaranteed security would be barred from risk-bearing business, including acting on behalf of clients in global financial markets. There are probably not more than forty or fifty banks whose failure would rock the markets. They are 'too big to fail', but at the moment their freedom to do risky deals creates the problem of moral hazard that is so often mentioned in the literature -- that is, their too-big-to-fail status actually encourages them to take more risk than they might have done without the status.⁹⁷

The 2008 international financial crisis, though born in America, was to such an analyst, predictable and inevitable. And though my mind does not reach the heights of complexity mastered by international political economists like Strange, the 2008 crash caused by entirely allowed, legal, risky speculations on mortgage breakups was no surprise to this author writer either. Banks in the U.S. "too big to fail" and given full reign to speculate to the detriment and failure of consumers everywhere, were given their bigness back, with seemingly no lesson learned by the neoliberal Fed and administration officials. The E.U. sided with Deutsche Bank at the expense of its union citizens yet again. The "enlightened conservatism" of finance which Therborn references, was dead in the water between the shores of the Atlantic.

And from Thomas Piketty and team, we now have a far more extensive data set for comparative, international financial analysis between 2000 and 2020, as he has filled out the much needed data gap that previously existed (particularly with publication of *Capital and Ideology*, 2020). It should be noted with great emphasis, that though the City and Wall Street hold the reins of neoliberal hegemony globally, this discussion is far more extensive internationally. Piketty expands beyond the scope of this particular study to encompass the non-western world, noting neoliberal ideology's negative policy effects in South America, India, China, and many other areas. This present study, primarily

⁹⁷ Strange, *Mad Money*, 189.

concerned with producing solutions out of the U.S. as the most powerful international influence, along with its European allies, remains limited in scope for now.

And so, the U.S. being no vacuum, the stage having been set, we come to how it has been phrased before: what is to be done? First, I argue, to escape the inevitability of the Washington Consensus thinking, from neoliberalism's tight hold of dominance, one must remove oneself from dualist thinking.

How Capitalism vs. Communism Dualistic Thinking Boluxes the Issue

It's my contention that there are many forms of capitalism, tempered and regulated in various ways, exemplified in history, and that both Marxists and pure free marketeers get stuck in either/or thinking. To explore this argument, I turn to the debates of some present, highly public, political philosophers.

Wendy Brown gives a thorough review of two important works: Michael Sandel's 2013 book, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* and Debra Satz's 2012 book, *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale*. Both thinkers are relevant to the analysis at hand, as is Brown's work. Sandel, in particular, is notable as a deliberately public philosopher, consciously encouraging deliberation around values and the common good. Satz explores the important relevance of dehumanization of women through systematic sexual commodification in our marketized society, important to this study for my interest in elevating value accorded to the natural, creative capabilities of women. On the scale of political-economic philosophy, Brown rightly praises Satz's analysis "as with Smith's formulations, (Satz) is effective in reminding us that his account of markets was complex, qualified, and featured greater social and political depth than that of many who now claim his mantle."⁹⁸ It is worth noting Brown's summary of both writers, so as to engage the consequences, which I see most effectively to be an engagement with the needlessly dualistic capitalist/communist debate.

⁹⁸ Brown, *Political Theory*, 359.

Brown summarizes both important texts as not attempting “comprehensive political theories of the effects of what we have come to call neoliberalism. Rather, as their descriptive titles make clear, these books pose a more old-fashioned question: what features of (mainly) human existence should and should not be organized, distributed or procured through markets?”⁹⁹

These “old fashioned” questions, as Brown calls them, are just as relevant today as to Ricardo, Marx or Socrates, perhaps more so given the unchecked power of international finance and its number one supporter, the U.S. federal government. Sandel correctly points readers to the marketization of society, the “post-1989 market triumphalism (and unabated by the 2008 finance capital crash)” having ‘drifted’ from ‘having a market economy to being a market society . . . (where). . . social relations are made over in the image of the market,’ and market reasoning is ubiquitous.”¹⁰⁰ To my total agreement, Sandel calls for public discourse on:

‘what role should markets play in public life and personal relations?’ and ‘which goods should [and shouldn’t] be bought and sold?’ In the absence of such a conversation, Sandel argues, our existence is not simply becoming more crass and desacralized—that much is obvious—but less just, fair, and respectful of human dignity. *Ubiquitous marketization submits democracies to two great corrosive forces: growing inequality and potential degradation of human existence as such.* These are the significant strands Sandel adds to theorizing the damage neoliberalism does to democracy, strands he develops subtly and thoughtfully.¹⁰¹

Brown points out that these arguments are not new. Yet Sandel’s contribution is substantial,

—to reveal how relentless marketization, far from promoting the equality and freedom promised by rational choice economists, frequently undermines them.... Again, the argument is not new: Mandeville, Smith and Marx (and before them, Plato and Aristotle, and after them, Veblen and Marcuse) have all made the point. But Sandel’s talent is in linking scores of quotidian examples to reveal how marketization transforms an entity or activity’s value, our own sensibilities and principles, and society as a whole.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Ibid., 356.

¹⁰⁰ Brown quoting Sandel (10–11) in *Political Theory*, 356.

¹⁰¹ Brown quoting Sandel (author’s emphasis added) (10–11) in *Political Theory*, 356.

¹⁰² Brown, *Political Theory*, 357.

Here, Brown departs from Sandel's reasoning as she sees his framing in terms of values, choices and "inadvertent 'drift'" rather than historical forces of capitalism itself.¹⁰³ I'll agree with Brown that Sandel "understates the dimensions and depth of the problem" and that history demonstrates against "markets as that which, once returned to their proper place, will cease to generate the inegalitarian and corrupting effects he illuminates so well."¹⁰⁴ Brown continues, and here I part company with her: "This, of course, is to abstract markets from capitalism itself—its ceaseless expansion, its basis in and production of inequality, its descralizations and its production of orders of reason that normalize it."¹⁰⁵ Sometimes, but not always. This was not the case in capitalist examples of Christian Democratic Germany, in Mitterand's France, in Scandinavian forms of welfare capitalism throughout the last century, even, and most important to this work, in the "golden era" of capitalism 1945-1970 in the U.S. We also see easily in these free market examples tempered with regulations, *prevalent and popular care policies*, though differing in scope and structure, yet all championing care work, children's care, social welfare and education. We can also see reinvestment incentivization structured policies as opposed to laissez faire profit incentivizing.

Of Satz's important book, on a similar mission to Sandel, Brown pegs her most valuable contribution as "revisiting the classical economists to reveal how much broader, deeper and more critical were their perspectives on markets than those of their neoclassical heirs."¹⁰⁶ One passage is worth noting for the entirety of my work here:

The neoclassicists, treating undesirable market effects mainly as a sign that marketization is incomplete, cannot account for common opprobrium toward, for example, vote buying, sex exchanged for a promotion, mercenaries or contract slavery, when both buyer and seller consent and gain. *The classical economists, on the other hand, not only grasped the socially embedded quality of markets but knew markets could not be the sole organizing principle of society without destroying it* (39). Satz particularly values Adam Smith's understanding of markets as heterogenous and as profoundly shaping societies and individuals; his recognition that labor markets may be quite deleterious in this shaping; and above all his belief that the value of markets lies in the substantive freedoms they

¹⁰³ Ibid., 357.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 357.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 358.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 357.

enable— freedom from dependency and arbitrary power and not only freedom for interest maximization (46, 49, 51).¹⁰⁷

Let's pull that out, because though the other thoughts are worthy, here it is, the crux: *The classical economists, on the other hand, not only grasped the socially embedded quality of markets but knew markets could not be the sole organizing principle of society without destroying it.* And the difference between the classical economists and today's? As already mentioned, it is their disaggregation of philosophy from economics--they're denial of values outside of market principles, hence the destruction, the desacralization of society we witness, hence the systematic lack of value accorded to care.

Brown comes down against both Sandel and Satz with the argument that it's not "noxious markets" (Satz) or "marketization of society" (Sandel) that's the problem, rather it's capitalism.

To grasp and measure the inequalities and corruption with which Sandel is concerned, or the weak agency and exploited vulnerability and damage Satz decries, we cannot remain, conceptually or empirically, "in this noisy sphere where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men" but must explore instead "the hidden abode of production" to which we might now add "the mysterious order of financialization." Here we will discern not merely the occasional noxious market, but the noxiousness of a global economic system in which the problems analyzed by Satz and Sandel—ever expanding commodification and monetization— are not incidental but bedrock.¹⁰⁸

I think she's correct in pointing to the system itself, yes it's a form of capitalism (the neoliberal variety), unhinged and allowed to evolve into its own extremities, but I do not believe that her implication that this particular form of capitalism is inevitable.

Essentializing is a grave temptation. Neoliberalism is clearly a natural *possible* outgrowth of (capital L) Liberalism and of capitalism, but it is not an essential inevitability. Its inevitability is perpetuated as such by the Washington Consensus. But such fatalism smacks of "what is, necessarily must be" denying the creativity of force, the great possibilities of alternatives in the human spirit, and exemplified historically in different societies mentioned already. Beware essentialization, dualism, and fatalism that scrap possibility.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, *Political Theory*, 362-63.

The many forms and proliferations of capitalism throughout the last century demonstrate against an implication of inevitability. Neoliberalism may be the current devolution, but it is not the only story. I have similar critiques to the current U.S. system of capitalism, as described above, as Sandel, Satz, and Brown innumerate, but I disagree with the contention these are inevitable. It is mistakenly fatalistic reasoning due to the following. A state socialist form of governance would necessitate the same call to action Sandel and Satz are (however imperfectly) decrying: namely overarching principles of governance. For any form of political-economic governance replacing capitalism, decisions would still be necessitated around governing values for common goods. This is the question of right regulation--the question governance over free markets is up against right now.

For instance, if we were to do away with free markets entirely for socialist collective ownership of production, taking the example of commodification of sex, governance in regulation of such would still be a question of moral principles--not of capitalism itself. The question resides in what is safe and just for sexual acts for which money is exchanged. Can it ever be so? If so it may be regulated within socialist governance or capitalist governance.

The question should be rather, how can we maintain the freedoms inherent in the market, utilize lessons of history when they fail, and temper/regulate markets for the common good around principles that value persons in and of themselves. Here I say, care and collaboration are the principles, and the lessons of history are in our useful hands for valuing both equality and freedom. Care--because the freedoms of citizens which a capitalist market serves are only beneficial if we are caring for each other. Collaboration--because this is the principle of survival. How does this operationalize?

Women caregivers, the essential workers--mothers, grandmothers, caretakers of the dependents, have much to say on this. We operationalize care and collaboration within our micro-political economies and see how our microcosms reflect the greater whole. Elsewhere, I will bring these experiences to bear on the arguments. Let it be said, Brown is a brilliant thinker, but she is, I believe, caught like many, in the either/or realm of

thought of the twentieth century pitting capitalist against communist in a cold war that ended with privatization and finance being placed ahead principles of democratic citizenship. There can in fact be multiple values governing principles of political economy, we can in fact break out of dualism into a both/and structure of thought that does away with dominance. Neoliberal dominance is just the latest form.

These meditations on Sandel, Satz, Brown and their forebears lead me to one more little question to explore: Why does a person reject capitalism outright and conclude state socialism is the answer? In hindsight, it's all too easy to point to Stalin's purges and Mao's genocide and say, well that's totalitarianism at its worst and any self-proclaiming communist must be a monster bent on consuming human freedom and lives. I am certainly not a communist, and do not in fact subscribe to any label. Yet many compassionate, hard working Americans have joined the communist party. Let's look at some motivators openly, through the lens of history.

I would point to the motivation of curtailing unchecked power. I see persons motivated by compassion for their own children, for the poor, unable regardless of effort to rise above disease, malnourishment and abuse. When owners treated men, women and children as slaves, we can hardly critique compassion for these. These are motivators of value to work towards an egalitarian society of shared goods. For Americans, the "communist threat" was at once both real and imagined. As WWII allies, the Soviets were seen for some time in America as the liberators from authoritarian, backward tsarist rule. The communist party in America drew mainly from Soviet inspiration and in response to the poverty and societal ills of the 1930s at home. As a growing threat to the republican governance, domestic communist party mobilization served as motivator for the Roosevelt administration into ideological compromise in policy: to regulate financial markets, offer unions voice, found social security, unemployment insurance, welfare systems for unprivileged, single mothers and the young, the post-war settlement with the demos as a whole--as Roosevelt himself said, *to save capitalism*. The threat was both real--the party was operational, and Stalinist communism became imperial and

totalitarian--and imagined--propaganda was used over the American demos during the Cold War to amplify fear of these forces for financial gain of the elite.

All such history is relevant to today's political conversation, to pop culture (un)awareness of socialist-communist-capitalist histories, most significantly to the either/or nature of political economic debate. Yes, capitalism won. Yes, the version of communism propagated in the 20th century became totalitarian, grossly oppressive and devoid of its own equalizing purposes. Those Americans shouting on the far left for communism right now have missed the boat of history.

We must bring the debate above the rhetoric of such dualism. There are well intentioned communists that come from a place of compassion for the Poor, just as there are good capitalists who come from a place of champions for the Free. Can universal values like freedom and equality each be given value? Let's be clear--neoliberal ideology says no. But that neoliberals of the last forty years have hijacked capitalism for themselves, making all values expendable other than profit is not inevitable. What Brown and many I believe miss are the many forms of free market capitalism that have proliferated in different times and cultures, regulated in different ways, because values other than profit have been elevated over owner's gains in policy. See Germany's social democracy post war era, see Mitterand's France, see Eisenhower and Truman era progressive taxation of the wealthy. And see also, the utter failure evident in the neoliberal bent of political economy leading to the 1929 crash and the world's reaction in so many government forms. That the political memory of Americans in particular is so short is a big obstacle we are up against in the either/or tendency. See for example Larry Summer's work in the Clinton administration, nullifying all wisdom gained from the Keynseian era and the fallout caused directly by repealing Glass-Steagall, resulting in the 2008 crash.

All this does not mean there is nothing to be done. It does not mean we throw up our hands on capitalism as many now do. If we were to do so, our questions of guiding principles, guiding values, would still be ever present--more so perhaps in the face of the state socialist totalitarian record. A total public ownership would necessitate a revaluing

of personhood, of care work, just as it does now. In the U.S. given the supremacy of private property enshrined in constitutional law, state socialism will not happen.

What is missing from memory just as obviously is the failure of unchecked laissez faire capitalism alone to be the salvation of nations, the bolster of democracy--the natural, “free,” “fair” and equalizing force free market economists have proposed in this forty year long neoliberal era. What is missing from the conversation nationally is the previously discussed fact of the purely free market being a myth. When either/or, capitalist/communist muddling of values has taken over the debate, the solution orientation of regulating markets, of how much and which regulations are best for the common good, gets wrongfully shoved into reactionary commi-red labeling.

To save capitalism from itself, its mechanisms need regulations, its policies moral overlay, valuing personhood over profits in particular cases of difference according to our natural interdependence for existence. This is a both/and solution orientation. It has been done before, it can be done again.

The ideas for solution oriented, interdependent thinking? Ask the women.

Chapter 5

Women's Care Work:

Integral to a More Free and Fair Political Economy

The experiential knowledge of women providing care work, by our co-creating and sustaining of persons is immeasurably instructive to the importance of promulgating care values overarching necessary policies and regulatory mechanisms within free markets.

Why Care and Collaborative Thinking Makes Good Common Sense

The observational perspective I present is through the political economic lenses of women's experiential knowledge. As women, the co-creator creatures, as the caregivers of the highly dependent, we have particular experiential knowledge to impart to this discussion. The method here is to use women's work, paid and particularly unpaid as the illustrative case study.

I ask the reader to consider these moral questions: through the lenses of philosophy, economy, or belief, what is of more value than the care of the vulnerable among us? Of all work to be valued, is there any more paramount than raising the next generation of human beings?

Whether from the higher echelons of spiritual value of spirit in the young, the economic use value of future generation of young workers, or the philosophic valuing of the other as other, I would challenge anyone to be able to name more valuable work than the creation of human beings and essential nurturing care of the vulnerable young.

For the purposes of nurturing, forming, and supporting care and collaboration among our young children, can care work even be overstated in its inherent worth? For the purposes of raising informed, educated, responsible citizenry, is there any work of blueprinting the

future generation more psychologically, emotionally, and intellectually valuable than a mother's care? I use these value-laden questions as mental guideposts for so-called "women's work" as a case study of political economy.

Examining free market formation and political economic theory, one finds of course Adam Smith's work is forever influential, but as much as *The Wealth of Nations* supports the need for state structure and law for free markets to flourish, I found myself asking as so many have, where are the women? In fact, since sexual reproduction and production in the home is absent from his seminal work, I found myself asking, as a political economist like Smith wrote of governance and economy, did he notice the work of his clothing washed, his food grown, prepared and presented to him, his care when sick in bed? To whom did he sing to for his super?

Swedish economist Katrine Marcal has written on this very question in her 2012 book, *Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner?* It is no surprise to this researcher that Smith never married, and his dinner was set before him by his mother, Margaret Douglas, each day caring for him sick and well, washing his dishes and linens, supporting him physically and emotionally in the home all his life as he pursued political economic theory.

It is my opinion that here we find a personalized microcosm of the discipline of macroeconomics. Not of great importance, the reader may ask? Consider this passage:

"Margaret Douglas is the missing piece of the puzzle. But it doesn't necessarily follow that when you find the missing piece the solution will become clear. 'There is no such thing as a free lunch' if one of the most-often quoted truths in economics. To this should be added: there is no such thing as free care. If society doesn't provide childcare that we all contribute to, then someone else will have to provide it. And that someone is most often a woman. Today, Margaret Douglas is the woman who reduces her hours at work to care for her grandchildren. She does this because she loves them and because there isn't any other solution. Her daughter and her son-in-law have their own jobs to go to. There's no chance their family could survive on one salary, when they can barely manage on two. It's usually women who reduce their working hours to care for their offspring and who, as a result, lose out on economic security, pension contributions and future earning. And it's our welfare, tax and pension systems that haven't been built to compensate them for this work or even take it into account. Women's responsibility for care is presented as a free choice out of your own free will, you have to accept the consequences. Everything from the Scandinavian welfare states to our neoliberal economies is built on women doing certain kinds of jobs in the workforce at a very low cost....And this is work that's often

related to care, to duty, nursing the sick, children and the ageing. Can today's problems in healthcare and education even be discussed without this perspective? The modern-day Margaret Douglas often takes care both of the children and of her own or her partner's sick parents. Seventeen percent of unemployed British women quit their last job to care for someone else. For men, that figure is one percent."¹⁰⁹

What is said here of Scandinavian and British political economy is of course even more on point in the U.S., where childcare subsidies and welfare state provisions are far less ample. The book illustrates how economics cannot possibly claim exclusive market solutions for society's problems and needs, most obviously the needs of dependents.

Marcal again:

...economics is still a science of choice--not a science about how society will survive, keep house and evolve. No overview of society and how people are created and formed in relation to each other is found within behavioural economics. Economics remains the study of the individual. It asserts that dependency is not a natural part of being human, and power relationships aren't economically relevant.¹¹⁰

This last point hits it: What economists miss entirely is that dependency *is integral* to being human. We are born and die dependent. Women, most often mothers, are performing caring work eternally in the process--the bedrock survival of the economy itself. Classically women's work of caring for dependents thus proves to be an illustrative case study of the failings of neoliberal ideology and its antithesis--the valuing of persons as persons, regardless of their power quotient.

Nancy Folbre, an American political economist, sheds light on the conundrums inherent in our current economics of care. In her book, *The Invisible Heart*, she sums up the state of feminism for women in the following way:

Liberal feminism has demanded greater individual rights for women. Social feminism has demanded greater social obligations, especially for men. For reasons that have to do with our economic system, as well as our political history, liberal feminism has enjoyed relatively more success in the United States than in the more traditional societies of Europe. *Its very success has contributed to a dilemma*. Women know they can benefit economically by becoming achievers rather than caregivers. They also, know, however,

¹⁰⁹ Katrine Marcal. 2016. *Who Cooked Adam Smith's Dinner?: A Story of Women and Economics*, New York: Pegasus, 192-93.

¹¹⁰ Marcal, *Who Cooked*, 153.

that if all women adopt this strategy, society as a whole will become oriented more toward achievement than care.¹¹¹

In this summation, Folbre is I believe pointing to the deficiencies in both social and liberal feminist thinking, each devaluing the care work of women so essential to society. Market competition, individual achievements, autonomization of persons will not provide the essential care for the next generation and the needy. And socializing care out of women's reach by handing it to the state will degrade it as well. Rather a revaluing of "women's work" by an insertion of its elevated moral value into markets is needed.

I assert that the most popular and most salient forms of feminism in America are a failure for women, and by extension our children, in that they succumbed to the neoliberal agenda. Equal pay for equal work has its own thrust of justice, but it is embedded in a property rights discourse over all other values. There is a strong rights discourse in American law, though most constitutional rights are negative rights (freedoms from oppressions or constraints) as opposed to positive (or freedom to certain social goods or entitlements). There are hard won gains in anti-discrimination law, many of which were achieved in the democratizing trends mid-twentieth century. Fantastic! However in the United States, which totes itself as the "greatest democracy in the world," there is still no ERA for women. Perhaps of greatest note, the United States is ranked within the top 10 countries of the world for incidents of violence against women. Significant for representation and citizen agency more generally, the Supreme Court *Citizens United* (2010) decision has institutionalized corporations as persons in the rights discourse of law, effectively marketizing the civil rights of sentient beings, giving near unlimited power to corporations and finance over the value of actual persons. While the personhood of women, refused elevation with the ERA systematically denied, and endemic domestic violence against women continues--at a staggering rate that we bemoan in supposedly less developed countries. Thinking must reorient to valuing persons in and of themselves.

¹¹¹ Folbre, Nancy. 2001. *The invisible heart: economics and family values*. New York: New Press, 1-2 (author's emphasis).

I argue that the focus on rights discourses and anti-discrimination law, though necessary, has not adequately addressed vast inequalities of incomes and the treatment of the dignity of persons.¹¹²

This study reframes “opting out” of the labor force by mothers to nurture and care as *opting in* to higher values of society’s common good and the good of the dependent. Folbre again:

Mary Astell...issued in 1694 a salvo entitled *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of Their True and Greatest Interest*. Astell played famously upon the inconsistencies of John Locke's theory, pointing out that it was a bit difficult to understand how, if kings had no God-given authority over their subjects, men could claim God-given authority over their wives. She complained that men seemed to consider the nursing of children as low and despicable even though no activity deserved more honor, or greater thanks and rewards. Astell located the source of women's subordination in their responsibilities for care: "Such the generous offices we do them: Such the ungenerous returns they make us." About a hundred years later, Mary Wollstonecraft would pick up the argument in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*..¹¹³

Of course the nursing of children is a high honor for women, and it may be that it was not accorded that honor because men just can't do it--there is no competition. But this should not stop the noble and compassionate to choose to honor women for our great gifts, men of substance and thought certainly do. For society building as a whole, for the health and developmental benefits of nursing, mothers choosing personal care of their babes and children over competitive income is a common good. In the giving of loving care, in modeling self giving, for positive psychological formation, in education that places valuing personhood at the forefront of values, it is honorable work of the highest caliber. And in this work, the mother is irreplaceable.

¹¹² The dismantling of post-war socioeconomic policies in the 1980s-90s which were beneficial to women, to the vast population and to marginalized groups in particular, was in direct response to the democratizing forces that had gained ground post-war and through the 1960s and 70s, serving as the undercurrent of ideological justification for neoliberal hegemony of the past 40 years. The Supreme Court decisions of this era were unprecedented in democratic scope, and are relevant to review, as the backlash to these correlates to macroeconomic responses of oppression. The rights discourse and focus on identity politics of the last 10-20 years has been inadequate in that over-arching macroeconomic ideology and policies are often simply ignored as possible origination of oppression within identity politics, and the financial powers which policy makers serve across party lines have systematically quashed participatory democracy.

¹¹³ Folbre, *The Invisible Heart*, 5-6.

And now to the question of practical import, given all this exploration of ideas: How does elevating care work in value operationalize in political economy?

There are some who say, the experience of caring for dependents, babies, little ones, elderly, disabled, can only be elevated in value for individuals and society if men take part in the work equally. In other words, the value of care will elevate if women's experiences are shared by men. There are a few men who can provide care in adequate share as does a woman, but it is not common. So, as an operationalization to elevating care in value judgment, I disagree with this approach. First, the claim assumes men's experience of caregiving will be the same, which it cannot be, the experience of birthing and nursing a child is unknowable to a man, given women's vastly different experience of giving birth and feeding children from our bodies. Second, it smacks of elevating an activity based on men's valuation over women's. But primarily I disagree with this motivation of equalizing care by sex based on the arguments of telos and scientific evidence around women's ability to give birth and sustain life.

As women we carry children in our wombs, with all the pain, heartache, and joy that entails. The cells of these tiny humans and ours intermingle, so that even when the child is fully grown at 18, his cells are still present in the mother's brain. The psychological, spiritual and intellectual connections of the babe in utero to the mother are at once scientifically documented and infinitely mysterious. Even the children who are lost before birth leave their DNA footprint on the mother. And these bonds remain when the new being enters the world. A newborn does not want or need his/her father. As I write this I feel drawn to apologize to men that this is no insult. But this should not be the case--men should revel in the woman's mysterious, emotional and intrinsic connection to the newborn child. Many a new father has bemoaned this reality, when his wish has been to be "equal" in the caregiving work of the mother. The newborn child is intrinsically, cellularly tied to the mother, the mother being physically and psychologically her home. This is all so obvious and natural, it seems almost silly to write, but it is of great spiritual and developmental importance for children, thus all society. And it seems swept away in all its factual simplicity by economic policies that deny it.

It is not a gender role issue, a stereotype problem--the very inner plumbing of women elevates their value as creators and caregivers. My personal experience of giving birth naturally to three children was highly instructive in this way to me personally, as was facilitating a mothering group supporting over one hundred new mothers of diverse backgrounds. The newborn child wants the mother both because she does not distinguish between their two bodies and minds, having just come from the mother's body, and because the mother is physical and emotional comfort in all ways. The mother, for her part, knows and feels the child better than any could on earth, retains the cells of her baby in her brain for decades to come, thus "caregiver" or father, though they may be caring and capable of care work, are not replacements.

The elevation of value must be for the mother and her essential work, not for her replacement by whatever is technologically or economically convenient.

Cynthia Enloe's seminal *Bananas, Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, covers the importance of women's positioning within IR. A book I read as a graduate student in the 1990s, it was important at the time, as one of the only major works examining the intersection of feminism and IR. Still important, Enloe emphasizes the feminist observation that the "personal is political," reframing it as "the personal is international and the international is personal," thus highlighting the interconnected micro and macro power spheres of sex and politics.¹¹⁴ In Enloe's words: "Read forward, 'the personal is international' insofar as ideas about what it means to be a 'respectable' woman or an 'honorable' man have been shaped by colonizing policies, trading strategies and military doctrines....'The international is personal' implies that governments depend upon certain kinds of allegedly private relationships in order to conduct their foreign affairs."¹¹⁵ Enloe looks at many areas where sex and IR intersect to overpower women's agency: women's positionality during wartime, on military bases, at the UN, within majority female international industries, and the forms of study within IR as a field perpetuating male domination.

¹¹⁴ Enloe, Cynthia. *Bananas Beaches, and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif Press, 1989), 195-201.

¹¹⁵ Enloe, *Bananas*, 195-201.

Industries are examined where women are the internationally majority and dominated structurally through low pay and poor conditions such as migrant labor, domestic work, agriculture, care work, the international tourism industry, sex trafficking and prostitution. At the level of transnational organization, she examines the international agreements that create and support these structures. The emphasis in Enloe's critique of many harmful international policies or lack of them being ideologically neoliberal is well taken. When IMF and World Bank policies (dominated for decades by American neoliberal ideologues) place austerity, private profits and production "growth" measures over all else, what chances have the care workers, paid and unpaid?

There are two distinct groups of unpaid care workers. The first group is women, mostly mothers, who weigh money and caring options and *opt-in* to care work at their own expense. Women opt-in to being home, caring for children, dependents, the less than able, the elderly--not because we're unable to perform paid labor but because we determine it is of higher value than earning money. The second grouping is women who opt-in to unpaid care work out of total necessity. After calculating that the pay in the labor market minus child-care cost makes paid work completely useless.

Reframing opting out of the paid labor market to opting in to unpaid care work changes the morality and politics around the debate.

I have personally experienced both situations. In each I've opted-in to care work for my kids. For long periods of time, I've accepted below poverty line living conditions for the sake of giving my children the most loving care of their mother. At other times, the math of available work minus child-care costs have been prohibitive. As a creative solution, for my third child, I developed a preschool cooperative, funded by grant money I achieved through unpaid writing services, and supported us by becoming the program director and teacher for my son's class. Though innovative at the time, it was also a method of mere survival, as childcare costs elsewhere were so high, paid work out of the home would have brought in next to nothing.

Choosing to opt-in to unpaid care work is, on the one hand, choosing the mundane--cooking, cleaning, repetitive actions of sustenance. On the other, it is choosing the complex psychological and spiritual work of raising children as teacher,

counselor, and spiritual advisor. It's 24 hours per day work, though looking like freedom perhaps to an outsider who has not done the work, in actuality it is a process of self-giving that places one's ego outside of personal freedom. It is loving self sacrifice. To choose this in the majority of American mothers' cases is to choose less income, less status, and for some, it is a conscious choice to live below the poverty line. And for many mothers, it is not a choice but a necessity. In either case, the care work of women goes unaccounted for and vastly undervalued in political economic analysis.

A feminist political economist who has written extensively on the invisible women's economy and need for new conceptualization and accounting is the New Zealand stateswoman, IPE scholar and UN analyst, Marilyn Waring. In "Counting for Something," Waring describes and critiques economic data collection at the international level of UN analysis (relevant and applicable to the U.S. case and many others), with the purpose of presenting alternative methods of accounting to include women's previously unaccounted economic contributions, thus advocating policy changes that reflect and serve economic realities rather than rendering women's work invisible.¹¹⁶

At the UN and nation state levels of accounting, economies are defined in terms of market transactions alone—consumption, investment, income, production totals—and the underpinning economic and caring work of women is not counted, leading to policies that perpetuate social, economic and political inequalities. Waring describes the United Nations System of National Accounts (UNSNA)'s Western bias and basic ignorance of women's work, from home maintenance and cleaning to breastfeeding, child care, food production and preparation to "gig" economy work and their deliberate omission from statistics--all revealing that definitions of production, unemployment and other measures are faulty.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Waring, Marilyn. "Counting for something! Recognizing women's contribution to the global economy through alternative accounting systems." *Oxfam's Focus on Gender*, eds. Joanna Kerr and Caroline Sweetman, Eynsham: Information Press, 2003, 35-43.

¹¹⁷ Waring, Counting for something," 35-37.

The Statistical Commission reported: 'As far as household production is concerned, the central framework includes for the first time all production of goods in households, whether sold or not, and services if they are supplied to units other than their producers' ... The UNSNA just miss the point, and in so doing fail to reflect the reality of the majority of women on the planet.¹¹⁸

To give a concrete example of Waring's point, I am personally an organic gardener, orchardist and mother. If I sell my produce it's counted by UNSNA (or equivalent U.S. federal measurements of production and growth), if I grow it, preserve it, store it, consume it, it's not counted. If I pay someone to watch after my children, their wage is counted, cost of formula is counted, food and supplies are counted, education cost is counted, and my wage of employment outside the home is counted; however, if I breastfeed my own children, grow the majority of our food, and provide children's care and education as mother, that labor is not counted, hence termed "invisible economy." None of this essential care work is counted in GDP measurements of nation states, UN accounting, or public policies relating. The obsession remains on "growth."

Other unaccounted activity includes e-commerce, services in the informal sector, self-sustaining production, but regardless of their inaccuracies, governments, the UNSNA and businesses remain wedded to their accounting system. Waring poses rightly. I believe that the only way of overcoming economic crisis is to "draw back far enough to see where value lies in society."¹¹⁹ New measures are needed to reflect full economic realities.

Observing the various tyrannies of 20th century regimes, we have such wealth in lessons of experience at our disposal! The slide into tyranny, so quick and easy, comes in corporate form as well as collectivism. National Socialist Germany and Soviet Russia make their ideological failures obvious by losing. But just as bright a lesson is shown by the light of history on corporate Fascism in Mussolini's Italy (now popping its head throughout European parliaments) and perhaps most instructively by the first neoliberal,

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 37.

¹¹⁹ Waring, Counting for something" 37.

American backed, Chilean experiment in corporate tyranny which unseated democratic rule for financial dominance.

Again, tyranny comes in many forms and faces--the current neoliberal version being more cunning because its face uses a mask of “free” and “fair” while its elite financial dominance unseats democracy and moral values. Care and collaboration, the moral values of mere survival, sustenance and abundance, do not figure into this cunning mask. For neoliberal ideology is a belief system of lack. For those practicing care and collaboration, it is survival and abundance.

To break up the myth? To create thought anew? One must deny the either-or thinking that has so dominated the TINA, post-modern demos. Is there a solution orientation piercing through misinformed, dominance saturated thinking? Absolutely, love and sustain a child, grow food, and solutions of care and collaboration emerge naturally. This no flippant remark or over-simplification, it is living values, the work of living honestly, naturally and responsibly in the world for the sake of the other, the whole.

Care, Collaboration and Our Interdependence

Solution oriented thinking I present begins with a collaborative orientation that obscures the either/or thinking above, and places care above other principles. Whether one considers our global environmental interdependence, our economic interdependence, our psychological/spiritual interdependence, the care and collaboration inherent to women’s historical experience informs the whole.

The single parent is particularly illustrative of the collaborative orientation. Throughout history, we have had vast populations of fatherless children, whether from war times, depressions, refugees of disasters or persecutions, and the women have risen to the occasion. Women have found any means to care for their families, through poverty, lack of resources, pandemics and recessions. We have bartered food and goods, traded

childcare, and entered the paid workforce by necessity whenever necessary to care for children's survival. The mass influx of women into the paid workforce during world wars in the U.S. have been major, popular examples in the literature, with Rosie the Riveter exemplifying women's capabilities to second wave feminist media. But I would argue, not only was this not anomalous, it also misses the mark of women's historical collaborative contributions and experiences.

Women have always been capable of paid work in the marketplace. Entering paid employment doesn't prove an equal capability to men in paid work, there was no need that it be proven. We most often value caring for dependents more than money. In this way, when women spearheaded feminist movements in the 1970s couched in terms of economic equality, I believe they also missed the mark. Focusing solely on competing with men like men in the marketplace devalued the essential caring work that instead should have been elevated in value. When we entered the competitive job market en masse to make money outside the home as though to prove we could, there was in fact nothing to prove, and our wages were cut enormously by the child care costs it necessitated. To be clear, I am not arguing that paid work outside the home isn't a woman's right, or equal pay for equal work was not necessary to win under law, it absolutely was. What I'm arguing is that the "women's movement" should have been a men's movement--a movement of revaluing care.

And here I part ways with many popular and powerful feminist voices. As previously argued I am against Tronto and others who hold that association of women's care work and maternal roles denigrates women. For instance, in *The Care Manifesto*, which I reference as replete with excellent analysis and much to recommend my valuations and policy prescriptions here, we also find this lamentable attitude: "The traditional nuclear family still provides the prototype for care and for contemporary notions of kinship, all stemming from the mythic ramifications of the first 'maternal bond'."¹²⁰ Feminists again, shooting themselves down, disempowering their own internal power--of creatin no less. To reference myself as an example again, I do not run a traditional nuclear family, but

¹²⁰ Chatzidakis, et. al., *The Care Manifesto*, 17.

have raised and support my three children myself, so no, a “traditional” nuclear family is not necessary. But to refer to the maternal bond, facetiously in quotes as “mythic” denies, denigrates, and insults the inherently beautiful abilities, the inborn power of women. This attitude denies the empowerment of maternal bond, on its well established psychological bases, scientific molecular bases, its sociological basis, and perhaps most importantly the immeasurable spiritual basis of relationship between mother and child. For feminists to take such attitudes in the name of women is lamentable in the deepest sense of the word for women, children and all society.

Affirmation should be championed for the maternal role, work, and process as essential and valuable for the dignity of woman, the new human beings as well as society holistically. Paternity should be championed for its deep committed yet differing meaning, in emotional and physical support of mother, infant and society as well. Elevating the care work and collaborative efforts necessary to raise the next generations and dependents should be a turning of men towards the spiritual, psychological, and physical needs of little ones, and the women who bring them to the world. “The fathers shall look to the children.”

Comparative Policy Possibilities

Comparative analysis provides possibilities for the policy prescriptions. Of the solutions compared, I offer two considerations of long established programs: one within U.S. borders at a local level of governance and others as international comparison at the state level of governance. Both illustrate that placing higher value on care of dependents and prioritization of women’s essential care work can be moved towards in policy.

Internationally, there are many policy possibilities to consider for instituting values of care for dependents and essential care work. For Great Britain since the late 1970s for instance, the invalid care allowance within the social security system was established offering an allowance for *infirm* dependants. However, it was denied to married women

“on the grounds that caring was part of their normal duties.”¹²¹ Similar restrictions applied across European social systems. We see here the echoes of Carol Pateman’s work who argues that “the language of universal equality is a fiction for women in politics associated with the idea of the social contract; equal treatment masks the fact that women are incorporated into society differently from men...not as individuals but as mothers, wives and daughters of men.”¹²² Women can’t be simply “added in.” But though Pateman’s social contract analysis vis a vis women’s experience is admirable, she does not prescribe what is to be done.

The Scandinavians have tackled what is to be done for care with perhaps the most value driven practical solutions and concrete policies. Similar to Great Britain and other European states in the 1970s, Swedish and Norwegian policies reconceptualized the political economy and care work, expanding entitlements and leave from work for care of young children. Arnlaug Leira writes: “the expansion of entitlements to parental leave is significant because it establishes the primacy of parental obligations to care for children over the demands of the workplace.”¹²³ In Sweden, 450 week-days of parental leave income replacement is provided to each mother following the birth of a child. With 60 days reserved for the mother prior to labor, the remainder of days may be split between mother and father as they wish, up to the child’s eighth birthday.¹²⁴ In Norway, women have entitlement for pregnancy of 33 weeks leave with 100 percent income or 42 weeks with 80 percent income replacement.¹²⁵ “In the early 1990s, parties to the centre and right in Norway and Sweden advocated an increase in economic subsidies to families with young children. The social democratic parties and other parties to the left generally argue more strongly in support of women’s rights to economic independence and in favour of high-quality, state funded child care both as a means to that end and as a means of enhancing equal opportunities for children.”

¹²¹ Lewis, Jane. 1993 “Women, Work, Family and Social Policies in Europe”. In *Women and Social Policies in Europe*, 17.

¹²² Meehan, Elizabeth. 1993 “Women’s Rights in the European Community” in, *Women and Social Policies in Europe*, Jane Lewis, Ed., 203.

¹²³ Leira, Arnlaug. 1993 “The ‘Woman-Friendly’ Welfare State?: The Case of Norway and Sweden” in, *Women and Social Policies in Europe*, Jane Lewis, Ed., 65.

¹²⁴ Leira, 65.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 66.

To be sure, these policies are framed to raise women's status in the economy. But they do not elevate the value given to women's essential care work in and of itself. In support of my prior argument that it is care itself, women's natural reproduction itself that should be elevated, Leira points out that "terms like the 'woman-friendly' state or the 'public family' exaggerate the impact of the welfare state. Women are not integrated into the welfare state on equal terms with men unless they behave like men with respect to work and family obligations...because of three interrelated elements: the importance accorded to paid work over other forms of work, the definition of essential parts of social reproduction as a private responsibility...and the division of labour by gender, which ascribes the greater part of time-consuming unpaid care to women."¹²⁶

However, from the perspective of the U.S. political economy, dominated by neoliberal profits over persons in policy, the Swedish and Norwegian policies elevate women's work and dependent care high into the echelons above our federal policies. Swedish parental leave in particular, is heavily weighted towards valuing mothers' care during pregnancy, postnatal care, and the care of young dependents. weighted towards supporting single-parent care as well, and possibility of a fathers' stable care secondarily. The benefits in the Scandinavian cases of universal health care, nature centered, free education are enormous for the care economy of dependents as well, but would constitute a whole book. For the purposes here, let it be said that prioritizing the value of motherhood, and focused care of dependents through progressive taxation is well demonstrated within the Scandinavian policy case.

At a local level within U.S. borders, Washington State policy offers another successful example of care prioritization in public policy, showing it can in fact be done within the neoliberal hegemony of even these United States. These modest programs are a step forward, significantly without state income tax, and though they are not nearly enough, are worth pointing out. With the Fair Start for Kids Act, child care subsidies for income earners below certain annual income have pre-kinder child care subsidized with only a

¹²⁶ Leira, 69.

minimal contribution. As this table makes clear, a caregiving parent must be below the state standard minimum income level to qualify. One might argue these income levels also do not reflect a decent standard of living, however, again merely the existence of the program is a step forward in valuing care, both of the giver and receiver. Published online as of November, 2021, below is the schedule for significantly subsidized child care, provided for children by number of household members and total annual income level progressively:

Family Copayment for Subsidized Child Care

The Fair Start for Kids Act, passed by the Washington State legislature in 2021, makes significant changes to subsidized child care over the course of the next several years. On October 1, 2021 the family copayment for subsidized child care will change. The table below shows the new calculations.

Family Size		0 to 20% SMI	More than 20% to 36% SMI		More than 36% to 50% SMI		More than 50% to 60% SMI		More than 60% SMI to 65% SMI		85% SMI Monthly
1	0	882	883	1588	1589	2205	2206	2646	2647	2866	3749
2	0	1153	1154	2076	2077	2883	2884	3460	3461	3748	4902
3	0	1425	1426	2565	2566	3562	3563	4274	4275	4630	6055
4	0	1696	1697	3053	3054	4240	4241	5088	5089	5512	7209
5	0	1968	1969	3542	3543	4919	4920	5903	5904	6394	8362
6	0	2239	2240	4030	4031	5597	5598	6717	6718	7276	9515
7	0	2290	2291	4122	4123	5725	5726	6869	6870	7442	9732
8	0	2341	2342	4213	4214	5852	5853	7022	7023	7607	9948
9	0	2392	2393	4305	4306	5979	5980	7175	7176	7773	10164
10	0	2442	2443	4396	4397	6106	6107	7327	7328	7938	10380
11	0	2493	2494	4488	4489	6233	6234	7480	7481	8103	10597
12	0	2544	2545	4580	4581	6361	6362	7633	7634	8269	10813
13	0	2595	2596	4671	4672	6488	6489	7785	7786	8434	11029
14	0	2646	2647	4763	4764	6615	6616	7938	7939	8599	11246
15	0	2697	2698	4854	4855	6742	6743	8091	8092	8765	11462
16	0	2748	2749	4946	4947	6869	6870	8243	8244	8930	11678
17	0	2799	2800	5038	5039	6997	6998	8396	8397	9096	11894
18	0	2850	2851	5129	5130	7124	7125	8549	8550	9261	12111
19	0	2900	2901	5221	5222	7251	7252	8701	8702	9426	12327
20	0	2951	2952	5312	5313	7378	7379	8854	8855	9592	12543
		No Copay	\$65 Copay		\$90 Copay		\$115 Copay		\$215 Copay Second tier eligibility is for		

127

Child health insurance as well is free in Washington below a certain income threshold, without threatening bankruptcy of state government and has worked well for decades. Here we can see, published online as of November, 2021, that Apple Health Care for kids in provides for children again by number of household members and total annual income level progressively:

¹²⁷ <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-childcare/getting-help/wccc>.

Free coverage

(free for kids up to age 19)

Program	Single person	2-person household	3-person household	4-person household	5-person household	6-person household	7-person household
Apple Health for Kids	\$2,308 monthly	\$3,122 monthly	\$3,935 monthly	\$4,748 monthly	\$5,562 monthly	\$6,375 monthly	\$7,189 monthly

128

Washington has recently instituted a Care and Leave program for paid leave from work for pregnancy and care for sick dependents as well. Though the leave time is fairly limited and this program is in such a nascent phase its outcome is not yet analyzed, still it is hopeful, although I would argue it is not nearly enough, the Scandinavian models being far more affirming of care work. Yet together, comparing these programs in the U.S. to the Scandinavian models show enormous practical solutions for prioritizing care programs.

Head Start in America is another consideration. A much talked about popular program, Head Start is state instituted, pre-kinder child care for lower income parents, presented by liberal legislators as a possible universal good, educational and a form of care assisting those in need. It is in fact only good on paper.

Here I present myself and children as case study. Having been a single mother for two years of three children, having prioritized care of my youngest myself since he was born, I found myself in need of part time childcare to work for pay and considered Head Start. Because Head Start was free given my part-time working salary and number of household members, I visited the program multiple times with my three year old son, talked to teachers who worked there, one of whom is a neighbor friend, a devoted mother herself with reservations about recommending the program. I listened to my older

¹²⁸ <https://www.hca.wa.gov/health-care-services-supports/apple-health-medicaid-coverage/children>.

children's descriptions of how the toddlers were treated in the program, since they had observed for years in the public grade school. What I found was this. Pre-K children were graded each day with a color, green for good--for sitting still on their tiny rug square not touching any other child within inches of them, not speaking, and red for bad--having spoken or touched another child. There was a tremendous amount of distress in the children. When a child cried about missing parents or was accidentally hurt, the teachers were "not allowed to touch them." Developmentally, these requirements for 3 and 4 year olds are unworkable and potentially damaging, and the judgment system humiliating and degrading to the child, and a refusal of natural affection cruel. The food provided was according to state standards of food groups represented, but was mainly processed, not appetizing to my child or most, and mostly thrown away, also according to the state sanitation requirement. In all, I found the program developmentally inappropriate, enormously wasteful, and had no inclination to enroll my child, even if it was free. There is a chance some Head Start programs are better, but I doubt it highly. I live in a small but well funded, rural, close knit community school district and can extrapolate from my observations that larger school districts likely have less funding and greater challenges. I cannot recommend Head Start as a positive solution nationally, and I seriously doubt any of the Biden administration officials touting its supposed virtues would enroll a child of their own families. Institutionalizing care is both individually and socially damaging, as the psychological healthy attachment research amply demonstrates.

The conclusion here is that the state superseding mothering/parenting, taking over care of small children so that women or family caregivers may be competitors in the market economy is highly undesirable. American liberals, even prominent female politicians, often hold up institutionalizing care as egalitarian, empowering and feminist. This indicates their insulated elitism and utter ignorance and separation from the realities of working and middle class care inadequacies. The state as replacement caregiver degrades the care of the child and cannot be an adequate replacement for the caregiving skills of the mother/parent. In cases of extreme deprivation or violence it is justified, but these are the exceptions. I am tempted here to reference Soviet working mandates for mothers and the totalitarian day care centers that replaced them. I'm tempted to offer the

documentation of the Third Reich forced conscription of young women and forced birth control to maintain the ranks. But I will trust the reader has a modicum of historical knowledge to not necessitate these. The bottom line is the nurturing care of a mother cannot be replaced in kind by any other, and a justification of doing so by the state for the purposes of competitive market participation by mothers of babies and young children is asking for psychological, emotional and educational damage to future generations. Rather, mothers of young children must be supported in policy to provide their greatest gift of inborn ability--to birth, feed, nurture and educate the young.

Policy Prescriptions

The priority in political economic policy must be valuing care of persons which the economy serves. Given the comparative considerations, here's how that should look. Top priority must be enabling and empowering natural, healthy mothering of mothers for their infants and other dependents. This care is essential, irreplaceable by the state and in fact less expensive than institutional childcare.

For pre-kindergarten child care, stipend or tax credit depending on income level and taxation history for parents under 75 grand annual, rather than state supplemented care programs which in the United States with large diverse population and geography would not be as manageable or high-quality as the Scandinavian example, see Head Start substandard evaluation consideration. Other policy considerations that are highly workable include incentivizing part-time work of parents but particularly mothers by extending the child care supplement over and income level threshold similar to what is successful in Washington state. This example is particularly salient on a practical level given Washington state is one state in the nation without income tax and an extremely accessible child care subsidy program below certain income levels.

Chapter 6

Concluding Thoughts and Proposals

Consider for a moment the nature, operations, motivations, and outcomes in the work of two prevalent types of persons discussed herein.

Women, mostly unpaid, but sometimes paid minimally, work in the following ways. We create new persons within our bodies, with all the physical, emotional, psychological labor that entails. We feed the next generation with our bodies, sustaining nursing with love, self giving of literally body and soul. We then nurture, educate, cooperatively share resources with other mothers, sometimes share childcare and sometimes are forced to pay for it in order to gain income to survive ourselves, depending on class, demographics, ethnicity, etc. We make all this work happen by giving of ourselves. We have not increased or decreased our market share of GDP. Our work is not accounted for in GDP, and is only counted when it is farmed out, paid for in replacement, and at our expense to income. This is reproduction in America.

Financiers, always paid, and at the upper echelons of income and wealth accumulation brackets. Investment bankers, speculators, derivatives and mortgage traders, produce nothing, create nothing. Moving money around by electronic convenience, one is hard pressed to find a way to describe how this activity adds to the common good, and therefore should be compensated “naturally” and “fairly” by the free market. Their “casino style” trading adds no value to the real economy or production. And as the recent 2020 summer stock market boom demonstrated during covid total recession of the real economy, the stock trade no longer relates to the labor market, actual production or the real economy. The financial market’s share of GDP, once a single digit throughout most of the 20th century, has risen by 2020 to over 40% of accounted profits. This is the financial economy in America.

To sum up, this comparison is meant of course to reflect where values (wrongfully) lie. The comparison, by monetary terms and by society’s valuations, points to the necessary turnaround of backward, illogical thought, values and operations being in order. The

work of a mother is immeasurable, irreplaceable. The work of loving care for any dependent is not replaceable in kind by paid care. We who perform the caring work of society cooperatively continue to reproduce the power form that sustains economy, sustains society, sustains life itself--quite apart from the dominators of crashes past and future.

To Do

As I bring together the many researchers and thoughts preceding, I return to the power of ideas. Simply stated, we create our societies with the thinking we choose, and choosing to elevate care and collaboration in our ideas of creating society and its policies is to choose truth to guide political economy.

On the eve of the 21st century, amid popular political philosophy flooded with postmodern relativism and neoliberal fatalism internationally, Therborn wrote:

Two issues appear crucial in the current conjuncture. First, are reality, truth and the search for truth about reality, meaningful conceptions? Only if they are, does any notion of progress, growth, development, or emancipation make sense. Is the occurrence or not of child exploitation, rape, torture, and murder a potentially universal truth, or only one 'local knowledge', or one 'narrative' among many? Second, can the Enlightenment tradition, of illumination, autonomy, maturity, emancipation, liberation, be separated from its historical economic base, of economic growth and of economic transformation? There are many serious voices now saying that a 'sustainable development' requires self-limitation, particularly on the part of Europe and North America.¹²⁹

His first issue points to its own rhetorical answer: yes, truth and the search for truth are meaningful and desperately need asserting. Second, sustainable development necessitates self-limitation: yes, by choice, by the power of rightfully arrived at ideas. Let it be noted, I do not claim to have comprehensive, all encompassing solutions for all societal ills or for all political economic policy. That said, I believe the discussion above is relevant to improving our ideas, perspectives and concrete policies.

In presentation of *The Care Manifesto*, Nedelsky states poignantly,

¹²⁹ Therborn, *European Modernity*, 365.

the structures of hierarchy and the structures of care are completely intertwined, societies can only achieve equality when distribution for care is just....I'm one hundred percent confident that if you looked at the silibie around North American on the millions of courses on justice, the amount of time devoted to care would mostly be nonexistence, it doesn't show up. But actually we can't restructure society to accomplish equality until we restructure care.¹³⁰

Of course, I concur. For the purposes of applying the principles of care and collaboration to political economic ideology and onto the table of policy, I have a two bit solution orientation: 1) macroeconomic/financial policies that effect the whole of society, thus the caregivers, dependents and vulnerable and 2) socioeconomic policy plans that place care and the valuing of personhood and our interdependence at the forefront of policies. It is highly important that both overarching structure and particularities of difference and unavoidable life dependencies be addressed--just one without the other will not suffice.

The Macro-Economic Policy Proposals

Free markets need regulation to exist, we cannot have a free market without intervention of law to structure and uphold contracts under justice. We must choose regulations that sustain capitalism, but within it sustain first and foremost the persons for whom it exists, valuing persons in and of themselves. The idea of the state as enemy does not serve a citizenry when capitalism is the economic system. The neoliberal falsehood of a “free” and “fair” market presupposes state regulation by law, for no market is free without enforcement, and no exchange is fair without enforceable contract, both of which necessitate the state. Thus, whereas citizen tax funding of bank bailouts is not usually justified, regulation of financial and banking house separation for citizen protection certainly is.

1. The first policy proposal is therefore: Re-regulate investment houses, decoupling them once again from banking houses.

¹³⁰ Nedelsky, *The Care Manifesto* symposium.

When income and wealth inequality get so extreme as to be destructive to the free market economy and the dignity of persons, as is currently the case, then progressive income and wealth taxation above a high income threshold is more than justified based on the common good. Progressive income taxation is an American invention and worked beautifully under even Republican administrations. Within the judgment of why inequality is undesirable and neoliberalism full of false claims is this: when r greater than g is always true, regulation and progressive taxation is absolutely necessary to 1) basic macroeconomics, to produce a spending base in the economy by the majority, 2) sustenance more crucial than growth, for reinvestment in the real economy by firms rather than offshore tax havens and speculative financial plays that risk citizen consumer's stability, and 3) to allow egalitarian agency within democratic regimes, by preventing inevitable stagnant poverty, extreme social inequality, violence and breakdown of society.¹³¹ Taxation to redistribute wealth in the "golden era" did not kill capitalism. Take notice that the Rockefellers and Carnegies families under Truman and Eisenhower administrations did not languish, still hold enormous corporations, wealth *and* their industries still thrived, still profiting under redistributive taxation of the 1940s through 1980s. On the contrary, there was twice the economic growth under these than under neoliberal ideological policies of the last forty years.

2. Thus the second policy proposal of progressive income taxation above an income/wealth threshold is a just policy solution now; specifically, zero increase in income taxation below \$75,000 household annual income, but progressive increases in taxation beginning at \$200,000 annual income and higher, capping at 70% of top marginal tax rate; estate and wealth holdings should be duly considered as well, for purposes of this study focused on income inequality measures and the care work subsidization increases, income taxation is preliminarily acceptable.

Macro-economic stability within national borders should be incentivized in three ways, leading to decreased income inequality and increased prosperity across the board:

¹³¹ Piketty, *Capitalism in the 21st Century*.

3. Thus, A) Incentivize reinvestment in companies within borders through tax deductions for both market and job stability with guaranteed unionization rights of workers, B) illegalizing tax havens abroad, and C) relatedly, monopoly and antitrust law should be utilized in force to apply appropriately to those newer proliferations as exemplified in the digital monopoly economy and digital trading in financial and currency markets.¹³²

One may ask, why do these macro-level financial and economic policies matter vitally to women's care of dependents? After all, this thesis concerns the elevation of care, collaboration and valuing of women's vital co-creation work. Is this scope too large for the micro-matters of mothers, caregivers, and children? It is necessary, because the most vulnerable in society are affected and damaged the most by gross inequalities of income inequality and the structure that supports it. Because the poorest and most vulnerable in society are always small children and the mothers who bear them and care for them. Because care, as unpaid work, is undervalued already, and for the elevation of its value, for the elevation of women's inherent worth and work, value must be ascribed in the forms of our ideas and our policies. Work that does not contribute to society (financial trading, currency trading, derivatives markets, speculations) should be reined in, regulated and removed from the higher echelons of valuation by intervention, and as it is regulated, it will lose its overinflated level of power.

The real work of reproducing, sustaining, and caring should be ascribed its actual value in more concrete terms of policy. The funds from the progressive taxation instituted above would be ample to provide for care programs weighted heavily towards mother's care, in the home, supplemented by fathers and family care by choice, placing women's essential, co-creation work of birthing and nurturing our next generation, the needy and the dependent elderly. Thus, the preliminary starting proposal, drawing on the Scandinavians' models and the State of Washington's care program achievements without state income tax.

¹³² The likes of Amazon, Apple, Google, Facebook, made to operate on American soil, subject to scrutiny under antitrust and monopoly laws strictly enforced; real time digital trading on financial and currency markets subject to regulation and taxation.

The Care Work Policy Proposals

Women's care work in particular illustrates the need of revaluation of work itself, of valuing persons in and of themselves, and of revisioning a more egalitarian free market economy structured around essential care work of the young and dependents. Women's classically unpaid care work is the bedrock of society's perpetuation and sustenance, thus its valuing is paramount. And the lack of value placed on care, whether in lack of monetization or low level of pay for care workers, the disablement of mothers to work outside the home given economic structures, and the demonization of welfare programs--all point to reevaluation of women's essential care of our dependents.

4. Thus I propose: institute fully subsidized child care programs for the care of preschool aged dependents, modeled on the Washington State subsidy for child care and free children's medical insurance below median income levels, as modeled, up to and including combined annual income of \$75,000; provide alternative incentivizing monetized reward for care of children preschool aged by mothers below the state median income level who choose to opt-in to caregiving work of children in the home, with option of father's or other family member care, at free discretion; this care policy would extend to dependents with special needs and to elderly dependents as well.

Pregnancy and infancy caregiving are the most nurturing, naturally beneficial to children's health, and also most highly vulnerable time for the care work of women. Lamentably, it is the time and space when women are most often the victims of domestic violence, particularly in America, where prenatal and postnatal maternity leave are not instituted, and women are physically and emotionally most vulnerable. The co-creation work of this delicate time should be structurally supported in policy for the economic and physical protection of women and children.

5. Thus, the prenatal and postnatal policy prescriptions are these: modeling after the Norwegian and Swedish maternity leave systems as previously outlined, instituting paid

maternity leave required to be provided by all employers for 450 work-week days (equivalent to approximate age when a new child can walk) and including any portion of pregnancy by free choice, and transferal to paternity leave by the mother's free choice; funding at the federal level should be similar in structure to implementation of 1940s Social Security and unemployment insurance programs by both wealth and income level taxation beginning over \$200,000 annual income progressively upwards, outline above.

In consideration of these proposals, I would ask the reader with caution, don't fall for either/or thinking. My propositions are not an all embracing state socialism but a rationale based on lessons of economic history, and designed and regulated to functionally sustain the capitalist economy, infused with an elevation in value given to care. Progressive taxation and redistribution has in fact saved free markets in the past, producing greater egalitarian opportunity in the markets of the West than ever before (and, as it happens, higher growth rates than under neoliberal policies). These proposals are a design to do the same, to make markets more fair and free. They are designed as well to increase citizens' egalitarian agency and nurture and honor the care of our dependents and we who care for them in our inescapable interdependence of being.

Neoliberal ideology is progressively removing all American values of society and persons and putting marketization in its place, falsely claiming natural law within finance, when natural laws of survival, sustenance and peace have always been mutual care and collaboration. If the American people do not wish a reductionist, commodified, entirely marketized life, if we do not wish to become a postmodern reproduction of old Europe, these arguments must win hearts and minds. Let's not repeat the stupidity from history, with a devolution into a financial authoritarianism quite possible. A functional, state regulated capitalism valuing the personhood of citizens must be made understandable from its historical success points for an educated population to dissolve either/or thinking and embrace a sustainable economic model based in collaboration and care.

Perhaps it can be seen as a blessing in disguise that the ERA never passed. It is of course a failure of conscience to recognize the equality in dignity and rights of citizenship for women equal to men by enough states and the federal government. However equality in kind is not the case for women and men, women having a far greater capacity in this one crucial and sacred aspect of our humanity. Women's innate capacity for birthing, feeding, and nurturing of children as they grow is not and never will be on equal footing with that of men. This seems such an obvious statement but is shockingly relevant to the American rights discourse. My point about the ERA is that second wave feminism's equality banner is exhausted, particularly when it comes to the efforts towards a care centered theory framework and resultant policies. Neoliberal ideology at the state level has subsumed the dignity of women into financializing them under a heading of equality. It is a disservice. Equal Rights is too narrow an idea to apply to women and men as our inherently separate creative gifts are so different--and quite meaningfully so for future generations. A deep and full recognition of difference in kind and what that entails for the elevation of women's work, for care of the next generation and citizens in need is the next banner. This is the solution orientation, onward and upward to reframing a value filled American political economy based in care and collaboration.

Prologue

The Covid “Crisis Politics” Wake Up Call

As an addendum to the arguments here, the Covid-19 economic shutdown should be a shock to the system, a wake up call to temper capitalism and corporate governance through changes in thinking and policy. The emphasis on the importance of the case can hardly be overstated. It underscores all written here about the need to dismantle neoliberal thinking and policy, the need of the essential care work as the vitality of society and the need to elevate its value.

In *The Care Manifesto*, the Toronto group authors write:

The crisis of care has become particularly acute over the last forty years, as governments accepted neoliberal capitalism's near-ubiquitous positioning of profit making as the organising principle of life. It has meant systematically prioritising the interests and flows of financial capital, while ruthlessly dismantling welfare states and democratic processes and institutions. As we have seen, this kind of market logic has led to the austerity policies that have significantly reduced our ability to contain the current pandemic - leaving many hospitals without even the most basic personal protective equipment health workers need. The undermining of care and care work, however, has a much longer history. Care has long been devalued due, in large part, to its association with women, the feminine and what have been seen as the 'unproductive' caring professions.¹³³

Because of the world wide shut down for the virus, many inadequacies of neoliberal ideology and policies have been exposed with particular poignancy. It is thus incumbent on policy makers to explore dimensions of the relationship within other scholarship being produced anew on this topic.

“In the Shadows of Coronavirus,” an essay by Antonio Vazquez-Arroyo, works to re-conceptualize catastrophe for the purpose of opening non-hierarchical, more egalitarian political change.¹³⁴ He writes:

¹³³ Chatzidakis, et. al., *The Care Manifesto*, 3.

¹³⁴ Vazquez-Arroyo, Antonio, “In the Shadows of Coronavirus” In the Midst Blog, in *Critical Times: Interventions in Global Critical Theory*, April 29, 2020.

Decades of social disaffiliation, privatization, and the dismantling of welfare institutions and provisions so central to the neoliberal regime of accumulation readily come to mind as mediating factors in this catastrophe. And, as always, the poor are the most vulnerable, not because of an increased likelihood of contagion, but because of a lack of testing and available medical care, which predates the outbreak and is one reason for pre-existing medical conditions. These are structural reasons at the core of shared understandings and values in North-Atlantic capitalist societies. This is nowhere clearer than in the United States, the closest to a pure capitalist social formation in recorded history.¹³⁵

With the stock market performance in summer of 2020 during pandemic and recession, one piece of evidence for this argument became crystal clear: the financial economy completely separated from the labor economy. The stock market, meant to reflect labor and production, soared into record numbers, reaching new levels of wealth creation for the already very rich, in direct opposition to the real economy, mired in many months of unemployment, increased poverty especially for dependents, single parents and caregivers, low production and labor stagnation. It is obvious that financial markets, and the US government which structurally supports them, have a power world all their own, devoid of value for the common good. This is one blatant indicator of system breakdown, made obvious by the Covid era, but there are more.

Particularly, the need in society for “essential care” has been highlighted by the pandemic. What is truly essential in society? Is it not to care for those who cannot possibly care for themselves? These in an economic shut down and home lock-down were children, the elderly, the disabled, the citizens with special needs. And who performed this nurturing care? The women. In vast numbers even after the lock-down was lifted, women left work they had long strove for, recognizing the value of care over all else.

“Essential care,” though clearly defined as medical care, emergency services, food production and other industries, should be broadened in general understanding due to the Covid shut down. With mainly women opting out of the paid workforce and opting in to care for children, the elderly, and the needy or dependent of many categorizations, what is *essential*, what is truly valuable work to society should be expanded in popular understanding of its meaning, and political economic understanding in policy initiatives.

¹³⁵ Vazquez-Arroyo, “In the Shadows.”

This is not to suggest that care and education of our dependents has not been recognized previously, but that it should be revalued. Feminist political economists have long exposed the “invisible” economy of care work, undervalued or not even recognized. It is therefore incumbent on researchers to examine scholarship being produced contemporaneously on the changing revaluation of care and collaboration within political economy as highlighted by the pandemic. *The Care Manifesto*, though published too recently to be entirely incorporated into this work, is an important piece of scholarship towards this purpose.

Vazquez-Arroyo argues that responses to catastrophe, such as the pandemic, are mediated by narratives of responsibility: by political ideologies, race, gender and class dynamics and structures of institutions and thought. Possible contagion of the pandemic may be universal, but vulnerabilities are highly particular—to ethnicities, immigration status, poverty, and by virtue of the market imperative of the capitalist system, insistent to carry on at risk under a publicly defunded state apparatus.¹³⁶ He writes that “catastrophes and crises have been crucibles in which forms of state power are involved and that provide openings and possibilities. The latter have been historically instrumentalized by elites seeking to expand or further entrench their power, even if the unintended consequences can lead a different kind of opening—say, the inauguration of measures that could create lines of flight from this catastrophic mode of production, lines of flight that ought to be taken to break from what is.”

Possible mitigation of such a catastrophe by the welfare state—dismantled—and public care and medicine—privatized—under neoliberal ideology and regime should be at the forefront of our understanding. Should we be on the lookout for this devious threat? Indeed, it has been observable politically and economically since the inception of the “Covid crisis.” More so, the catastrophe signals that the status quo was dysfunctional to begin with. Conceptualizing the current situation as in fact a heightened ongoing crisis of the system points to needed concrete policy changes. As I have written, a system of revaluation is in order, with structures restored or newly created to adequately cope with natural disasters such as the virus as well as post-catastrophe life in the status quo.

¹³⁶ Vazquez-Arroyo, “In the Shadows.”

Chomsky and Waterstone comment with agreement in their 2021 book:

Covid-19 has revealed glaring failures and monstrous brutalities in the current capitalist system. It represents both a crisis and an opportunity. Contests for controlling the narratives around the meaning of this pandemic will be the terrain of struggle for either a new, more humane common sense and society or a return to the status quo. The outcome of those contests is uncertain; everything depends on the actions that people take into their own hands.¹³⁷

My personal action is taken in writing, to argue for care and collaborative principles to reconceptualize our political economy anew. Let us utilize history, choose care for one and other on a courageous, structural plane of policy initiative. Let us conceptualize possibilities within our interdependence. And may we never give into an inevitability, a fatalism of catastrophe, for our power is in our ideas, may we construct them well, valuing our ability to give *power to* the caregivers and the least among us.

¹³⁷ Chomsky, Noam and Marv Waterstone. 2021. *Consequences of Capitalism: Manufacturing Discontent and Resistance*. London: Hamish Hamilton.

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