

**“Reconsidering Independence:  
Foundations of a Feminist Theory of Distributive Justice.”  
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**Abstract:** Traditional theories of justice and citizenship have been criticized by feminists because of their presumption of an autonomous, independent worker as their subject. The gender bias of this formulation of the subject of justice and citizenship denies both the unequal effects of individual dependencies on the autonomy of “independent” men and women, as well as the “independent” individual’s dependence on unrecognized and usually uncompensated care work. A feminist theory of distributive justice, in which the male-centric perspective is tempered by recognition of these dependencies and of the importance of care work, would promote gender equality better than traditional theories of distributive justice are able to do. I suggest that an unconditional basic income is the cornerstone of a feminist theory of distributive justice, which remains to be fully developed.

1. Introduction

This paper is part of a larger work in which I examine the philosophical case for an unconditional basic income, and ask why an unconditional basic income receives so little support from dominant liberal egalitarian theories of justice, particularly John Rawls’ *justice as fairness*, Ronald Dworkin’s *equality of resources*, and Stuart White’s *justice as fair reciprocity*.<sup>1</sup> In this larger project, I examine Rawls’, Dworkin’s, and White’s theories in detail, but I will not rehearse those critiques here. The most important critique, for purposes of this paper is, I argue, that they adopt, unquestioningly and uncritically, models of citizenship and criteria for the standing of citizens to receive safety net or redistributive benefits derived from the logic of capitalist necessity, rather than a conception of citizenship independent of and prior to the logic of capitalism.

This conception of citizenship—citizen as *worker*—is exclusionary of many men, of course—those who for reasons of inclination, aptitude, or ambition (as Dworkin terms

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<sup>1</sup> Almaz Zelleke, “Radical Pluralism: The Case for an Unconditional Basic Income in the United States,” PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, June 2008.

it)—are outside the workforce, but it is particularly detrimental to the interests of women. I discuss the implications of this conception of citizenship for the recognition and compensation of care work and for redistributive policy schemes elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I discuss the implications of this undefended conception of citizenship for theories of justice, and very tentatively suggest the outlines of a feminist theory of distributive justice.

## 2. Androcentric Theories of Justice and Citizenship

Dominant liberal egalitarian theories of justice and citizenship, including those of Rawls,<sup>3</sup> Dworkin,<sup>4</sup> and White,<sup>5</sup> share the problematic presumption of the autonomous, independent worker as their subject, without fully understanding how that subject embodies a gender bias that is inimical to women's equality. The androcentric formulation of the subjects of justice and citizenship ignores both the unequal effects of individual dependencies (such as dependencies of children, the sick, and the elderly) on the autonomy of “independent” men and women, as well as the “independent” individual’s dependence on unrecognized and usually uncompensated reproductive, domestic, and affiliative work—collectively care work—which is disproportionately performed by women. The effect of this gender bias in the realm of distributive justice in

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<sup>2</sup> Almaz Zelleke, “Should Feminists Endorse a Basic Income? Institutionalizing the Universal Caregiver through an Unconditional Basic Income,” paper presented at the 12th BIEN Congress, Dublin, Ireland, June 20-21, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Harvard University Press, 1971), and *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue: The Theory and Practice of Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Stuart White, *The Civic Minimum: On the Rights and Obligations of Economic Citizenship* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

general, and in the basic income debate in particular, is the reinforcement of economic inequalities between those with disproportionate responsibility for care work and those without, through the undervaluing of care work as a social contribution, and through misconceptions about the extent to which care work can be commodified and those who now provide it unburdened of it. A feminist perspective on justice and citizenship, through which androcentric theories are tempered by recognition of these dependencies and of the importance of care work, suggests a feminist theory of justice and citizenship which promotes the fullest conception of distributive justice—one that embodies a substantive gender equality—better than dominant theories are able to do. In relation to the basic income debate, I suggest that not only would a feminist theory of justice require an unconditional basic income, but also that it may be the *only* way to justify unconditionality against the gender-biased alternatives of universal work or participation requirements.

### 3. The Feminist Critique

The contemporary feminist critique of traditional political theory in general, and theories of justice in particular, has taken place in two stages.<sup>6</sup> It began with a critique of the idea of “separate spheres” for men and women, and the demand for gender neutrality in employment and before the law as the means to the elimination of gender inequality. The second stage began from the recognition that gender neutrality was insufficient on its own to eliminate gender inequality, and called for a recognition of gender “difference.” Traditional theories of justice have been challenged to incorporate gender differences into

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<sup>6</sup> See Michèle Barrett and Anne Phillips’ introduction to their edited volume *Destabilizing Theory: Contemporary Feminist Debates* (Polity Press, 1992), pp. 1-9.

their assumptions about the subject, and to recognize principles of responsibility and care in addition to rights and obligations.

### *3a. Separate Spheres*

The separation of social life into public and private or domestic spheres<sup>7</sup> is a construct that has enabled philosophers to limit their theories to the former and virtually to ignore the latter. Justice, rights, and the rule of law are meant to govern the public sphere, while love, altruism, and privacy are thought to govern the domestic sphere. Feminists have critiqued the separate spheres model for several reasons.<sup>8</sup> First, the idea of a private domestic sphere allows injustice to flourish within the family—including family violence and the unequal and gendered distribution of power, labor, and income. Second, the gendered inequality of the domestic sphere necessarily spills over into the public sphere, where women’s disproportionate domestic responsibilities prevent them from competing fairly with men for jobs, income, political power, and other forms of influence, and often relegates women to providing most of society’s *low-paid* care as well. But the third reason is one which would hold no matter who was primarily responsible for care work in the domestic sphere: the primacy in our moral imaginations and our social institutions of the model of competent, “independent” adults responsible for their ends and actions fails to recognize the enormous amount of work that goes on in

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<sup>7</sup> Following Kymlicka, I prefer the term “domestic sphere” to denote the sphere of family and care responsibilities. Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 390.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women In Social and Political Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1981); Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (Basic Books, 1989), pp. 110-33; Iris Marion Young, “Mothers, Citizenship, and Independence: A Critique of Pure Family Values,” *Ethics* 105 (3), 1995, pp. 535-56; and Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 386-94.

the domestic sphere to make the public sphere possible, and ignores the constraints that those who are primarily responsible for unpaid care confront when they enter the public sphere and are unable to leave the domestic sphere fully behind.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the question of what *paid* work responsibilities adult citizens have—one of the questions at issue in theories of justice and citizenship—can only take place upon the foundation of the enormous amount of *unpaid* work that transforms dependent infants into “independent” adults.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the “independence” of these now-adults is only maintained to the extent that chance—or more likely, gender—preserves them from being providers of unpaid care. In addition, some number of adults will never achieve independence or will lose it for a time because of handicap or age-related disability. In light of these widespread and quite natural limitations on competence and independence, the presumption of a competent, independent adult subject strongly limits the legitimacy of traditional theories of justice.<sup>11</sup>

The feminist challenge to the model of separate spheres requires not necessarily the rejection of the idea of two spheres, but a rejection of their rigid separation and of the implicit or explicit relegation of men to one sphere and women to the other. Gender

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy Fraser, “After the Family Wage: A Postindustrial Thought Experiment,” in *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition* (Routledge, 1997), pp. 41-66.

<sup>10</sup> See Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*; Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (Routledge, 1993); and Eva Feder Kittay, *Love’s Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (Routledge, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*; Grace Clement, *Care, Autonomy, and Justice: Feminism and the Ethic of Care* (Westview Press, 1996); Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 418.

equality depends on the recognition of their interdependence and the restructuring of social institutions to allow fluidity between both spheres for both men and women.

### *3b. The Limits of Gender Neutrality*

“Gender neutrality” in the legal, educational, and political spheres removes formal barriers to women’s access to education, occupations, suffrage, and political office, and grants women standing before the law independent from fathers, brothers, or husbands. Despite the vast opportunities opened to women by gender neutrality, three significant problems nevertheless remain after its widespread institutionalization.

The first problem can be characterized as the “stacked deck.” When gender neutrality is institutionalized after generations of gender exclusivity, even seemingly neutral and ostensibly relevant requirements or constraints can have unnecessarily discriminatory effects. The organization of the workplace into primarily full-time jobs, with benefits like health insurance and pension coverage largely limited to full-time employees in the U.S., is on its face neutral between genders, but necessarily works against the interests of those—primarily women—who are less able to commit to full-time work due to care responsibilities.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, union-negotiated rewards for seniority, and “up or out” policies in professional fields like academia or law, work against the advancement of women of childbearing age who take leaves to bear children and to care for them, or of any adult whose care responsibilities place inescapable limits on the intensity of their work commitments.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 378-86.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to the effects of seniority rules on women’s advancement, union contracts have often been complicit in occupational segregation of women into lower-paying job

A second problem with gender neutrality is that it does little to promote pay equity between traditionally male and female occupations. Gender neutrality may mandate that the occupations of sanitation worker and day care worker both be open to men and women without bias, for example, but does nothing to rectify the large imbalance in pay and benefits between the largely male occupation of sanitation worker and the largely female occupation of day care worker, despite the similar educational and training levels requirements for both positions, and the similarly low-skilled, somewhat physical and dirty nature of the jobs performed by both.<sup>14</sup>

Third, the doctrine of gender neutrality cannot address the problem of how to recognize and accommodate the gender differences that remain as a result of biology, socialization, and the gendered distribution of care work. The way pregnancy is treated in the work place in the U.S. is a good example. Despite tortured attempts to discuss pregnancy in neutral terms by the U.S. Supreme Court,<sup>15</sup> for example, the occurrence of pregnancy is limited to women, with no comparable condition likely to befall men. U.S. health insurers and employers struggling over how to define pregnancy in a gender-neutral framework that cannot accommodate a generally healthy, normal condition that nevertheless causes some work interruption have generally settled on treating it as a

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categories with fewer opportunities for advancement. See Barbara R. Bergmann, *The Economic Emergence of Women*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 55-58.

<sup>14</sup> The average hourly wage for a “refuse and recyclable materials collector” employed by a local government is approximately 50% higher than for a “child care worker” employed by a local government in the U.S. (\$15/hour vs. \$10/hour). U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Employment Statistics* (May 2006), available at [http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics4\\_999300.htm](http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/naics4_999300.htm).

<sup>15</sup> See the U.S. Supreme Court’s discussion of “pregnant persons” in *Geduldig vs. Aiello*, 417 U.S. 484 (1974), 496-97.

disability, even in routine cases in which the mother's health is not adversely affected. This is partly due to the increasing medicalization of pregnancy in the West, but also partly due to the recognition of the enormous drain on the mother of the first few weeks of a baby's life, even if her own health is fine. The idea of a *maternity* leave, which recognizes the demands of new motherhood, is more consistent with the actual conditions of a routine pregnancy and birth than *disability* leave, but less prevalent among U.S. employers, both because of its greater cost (since the exhausting demands of a new baby extend well beyond the few weeks of a typical maternal disability leave), and because of its gender bias: how, under the doctrine of gender neutrality, could employers offer maternity leave to mothers without also offering *paternity* leave to fathers—which would be considerably more expensive and disruptive to the workplace than a brief disability leave for the pregnant “person” alone? If employers were induced, or forced by law, to offer equivalent, gender-neutral *parental leave* to mothers and fathers, it might contribute to gender equality, if it inclined fathers to perform more of the care work required by a newborn than they traditionally have; but such even-handed neutrality fails to account for the fact that it is the *mother's* body that has gone through the extra burden of pregnancy and childbirth, and that only mothers can breastfeed their babies. On the other hand, if fathers received parental leave and did not increase their care work, gender-neutrality would in this case strike a blow against gender equality. Pregnancy and childbirth are in fact *sui generis*, and require both gender-specific and gender-neutral accommodations in the workplace, along with changes to the distribution of care work in the family, to promote gender equality.



True gender neutrality in employer recognition and accommodation of care responsibilities would be a major advance in redressing the gender imbalance in the division of care work in the family if it allowed men as well as women to take time away from work without penalty. But the doctrine of gender neutrality itself derives from the more general neutrality among life choices integral to liberalism. Liberalism sets basic ground rules and then gets out of the way of individual choices about how to live, with whom to associate, and so on. Social institutions are to be arranged so as not to privilege or unduly hamper the life choices of any individual or group. In this context, especially in light of the widespread availability of contraception and the accessibility of higher education and a wide range of occupations for women, having care responsibilities, for children or anyone else, is deemed to be a choice like any other.<sup>16</sup> This has two important implications. First, if having care responsibilities is considered a choice, then the costs of that choice must be borne privately rather than collectively, as with any other costly preference, such as a taste for expensive wine. This view is reflected in the dearth of publicly supported childcare facilities and relatively meager cash benefits and tax credits for families with children in the U.S., for example, compared to other advanced industrial nations. Second, if devoting oneself to fulfilling care responsibilities is seen as a personal choice, unconstrained by external institutions or limitations, the decision is removed from the realm of public debate over its terms and public recognition of its contribution.

### *3c. The Recognition of “Difference”*

Disappointment with the effects on gender equality of the doctrine of gender neutrality led some feminists to argue that the idea of neutrality masked a persistently

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<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., White, *Civic Minimum*, p. 111.

masculine subject, both at the level of theory and practice. Not only was the subject of theories of justice an autonomous, “independent” adult, free of both dependents and dependencies, the practical effects of androcentric norms of contributory citizenship served to exclude women from taking advantage of opportunities in the public sphere while further devaluing their work in the domestic sphere. Recognition of difference was demanded in two ways: recognition of the irreducible sexual differences between men and women that could not be attributed to socially constructed *gender*, and recognition of the lingering gendered distribution of labor in the domestic sphere that remained untouched by gender neutrality in the public sphere.

Despite widespread acknowledgment of these problems, feminists have yet to come to a consensus on how to address them. Partly this is because the ideology of neutrality readily suggests a framework of “choice” as the solution to the conundrum of how to recognize difference: women—and men, of course—can “choose” which sphere to devote themselves to, and the debate can shift to the merits of various policy proposals to enable those “choices,” without any critical analysis of why anyone has to choose between them. But mainly the lack of consensus reflects the fact that achieving gender equality requires a radical rethinking of the subject of justice, and a more radical restructuring of important social institutions than even many feminists are prepared to endorse.

#### 4. Recognizing Care: Feminist Models of Citizenship

Currently, the dominant feminist critiques of the status quo accept the androcentric norm of productive citizenship<sup>17</sup> and seek to enhance gender equality by providing women who work full-time with affordable dependent care services,<sup>18</sup> or by arguing that care work should be recognized and compensated as work with a *caregiver income*.<sup>19</sup> As noted by Nancy Fraser, this leads to the dominance in policy debates of two models of citizenship, which she terms the *universal breadwinner* and *caregiver parity* models.<sup>20</sup> These models mirror the more inclusive universal theories of citizenship in which universal work expectations are supported by extensive public care services, or unpaid caregiving is seen as a social contribution equivalent to paid employment.

The universal breadwinner model “aims to achieve gender equity principally by promoting women’s employment”<sup>21</sup> and requires support services designed to free

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<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Barbara Bergmann, “The Only Ticket to Equality: Total Androgyny, Male Style,” *Journal of Contemporary Legal Issues*, vol. 9 (Spring 1998), pp. 75-86. Linda Hirschman, *Get to Work: A Manifesto for Women of the World* (Viking, 2006), is a recent and particularly strident example.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Bergmann, “A Swedish-Style Welfare State or Basic Income: Which Should Have Priority?” in Eric Olin Wright, ed., *Redesigning Distribution: Basic Income and Stakeholder Grants as Cornerstones for an Egalitarian Capitalism* (Verso, 2006), pp. 130-42; and Bergmann, “Subsidizing Child Care by Mothers At Home,” *Feminist Economics*, vol. 6 (March 2000), pp. 77-88.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example, Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, pp. 142-44; Randy Abelda and the Women’s Committee of One Hundred, “An Immodest Proposal,” *Feminist Economics*, vol. 10, no. 2 (July 2004), pp. 251-58; and the Caregiver Credit Campaign, at <http://www.caregivercredit.org>. See also Christopher Beem, “Restoring the Civic Value of Care in a Post-Welfare Reform Society,” in Lawrence M. Mead and Christopher Beem, eds., *Welfare Reform and Political Theory* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2005), pp. 151-71, for a proposal for a brief caregiver stipend in support of a notion of “republican motherhood.”

<sup>20</sup> Nancy Fraser, “After the Family Wage.”

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

women from caregiving responsibilities that hinder their full-time work. It accepts uncritically not only the notion of “separate spheres,” but also the primacy of the public sphere for individual empowerment and flourishing, and as the primary site of gender equality. It views caregiving and other domestic work as problems to be solved through commodification—through increased availability of child and elder care, housecleaning, and meal preparation services.

The caregiver parity model “aims to promote gender equity principally by supporting informal care work”<sup>22</sup> and requires that care work be regarded and remunerated on a par with other paid employment. This model does not view the gendered distribution of labor as problematic, only the income inequality and lack of respect for care work it fosters. Compensation for caregiving is thought to be enough to raise its social and material status, allowing men and women to achieve equality despite the choice of different ends.

Fraser critiques both these models against seven principles she claims are essential to a comprehensive vision of gender equity: antipoverty, antiexploitation, income equality, leisure time equality, equality of respect, antimarginalization, and antiandrocentrism. The first two principles, which relate to sufficient income guarantees independent of “exploitable dependencies” (on spouses or abusive employers, for example),<sup>23</sup> can be satisfied by either model with a sufficiently generous social insurance program—although significantly both would require a residual means-tested safety net

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

for those unable to participate in paid employment (under the universal breadwinner model), or paid employment or care work (under the caregiver parity model).<sup>24</sup>

However, the remaining five principles are difficult for either model to achieve, because they depend on a fairly radical restructuring of work, caregiving, and gender relations, none of which is significantly challenged by either model. It is Fraser's last principle—*antiandrocentrism*—which holds the key to the other four. Androcentrism holds when men's dominant life patterns are taken to represent the norm for all, and women's recognition and income security depend on their conformity to those norms. Neither the universal breadwinner model nor the caregiver parity model fundamentally challenges the assumption of an autonomous, independent worker as the model citizen. The universal breadwinner model attempts to provide sufficient supports for women to participate in paid employment in equal numbers to men; the caregiver parity model seeks to recast unpaid caregiving in the mold of autonomous, independent work. Neither model recognizes that caregiving and household responsibilities cannot be fully commodified or restricted to the confines of employment-comparable hours and tasks;<sup>25</sup> as a result, both models are only marginal improvements on the status quo in terms of valuing care work, and continue to deny women true equality with men. Both models concern themselves only with the redistribution of what is primarily *men's* work—paid employment or other activities that can be molded to resemble paid employment. True gender equality, according to Fraser, requires the redistribution of what is primarily

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 56-57.

<sup>25</sup> Gwendolyn Mink, "Wage Work, Family Work, and Welfare Politics," *Feminist Economics*, vol. 1 (Summer 1995), pp. 95-98.

women's work—care work—as well, along with the restructuring of social institutions including but not limited to the employment and dependent care sectors. Fraser calls this model of citizenship the *universal caregiver* model. “The key to achieving gender equity in a postindustrial welfare state... is to make women's current life-patterns the norm for everyone.”<sup>26</sup> Rather than paid employment and care work being divided between workers and caregivers, all citizens would be assumed to participate in both kinds of work, and social institutions, including the work place and the social welfare system, would be structured so as to support this dual responsibility. The universal caregiver model, unlike the universal breadwinner and caregiver parity models, requires a radical reformulation of the subject of justice, and a reexamination of theories of justice with this new subject in mind.

### 5. Universalizing Care: Principles of A Feminist Theory of Justice

Feminist theorists have critiqued the androcentric subject of theories of justice since at least the 1970s,<sup>27</sup> but most feminist critics have suggested policy changes without first reimagining the subject in a way that balances the ideals of neutrality and recognition of difference. Fraser's universal caregiver model of citizenship is the first to suggest an alternative subject, and it provides a starting point for a reconception of the fundamental principles of justice and citizenship.

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<sup>26</sup> Fraser, “After the Family Wage,” p. 61.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Susan Moller Okin, *Women in Western Political Thought* (Princeton University Press, 1979); Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*; and Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford University Press, 1989).

The universal caregiver model of citizenship suggests that simply increasing opportunities for women in the public sphere without critiquing the pervasive assumptions of “independence” is inadequate. Gender equality is impossible to achieve as long as the domestic sphere is viewed as a secondary sphere of life whose problems can be taken care of—through expansion of childcare services, for example—and then forgotten. Attention to the domestic sphere demonstrates the pervasiveness of interdependence and dependence in human society, rather than independence.<sup>28</sup> Acknowledging the pervasiveness of dependence can be seen as threatening to androcentric ideals of autonomy,<sup>29</sup> but rather than being at odds with traditional theories of justice, this perspective can help to enlarge them and make them truly and fairly applicable to both men and women on equal terms.<sup>30</sup>

Furthermore, many feminist theorists, building on the controversial work of Carol Gilligan, have suggested that because of either biology or socialization, women are more likely to view the world according to an “ethic of care,” rather than justice.<sup>31</sup> The ethic of care prioritizes the creation and advancement of relationships, the recognition of subjective needs, and the provision of care, rather than the pursuit of one’s own ends—what Dworkin calls *ambition*—according to formal rules that apply equally to all. The

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<sup>28</sup> Kittay, *Love’s Labor*; Clement, *Care, Autonomy, and Justice*, p. 104.

<sup>29</sup> Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, pp. 162-63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*; Clement, *Care, Autonomy, and Justice*, p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development* (Harvard University Press, 1982); and Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (University of California Press, 1984). See also Tronto, *Moral Boundaries*, and Annette C. Baier, “The Need for More Than Justice,” in *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics* (Harvard University Press, 1994), 18-32.

ethic of care suggests that the fundamental and most challenging case of justice is not relations between independent adults who are fully responsible for their ends, but relations among those who are interdependent and often not fully responsible for their actions or needs.<sup>32</sup> But women's disproportionate responsibility for care work does not require positing cognitive differences between women and men; women's differential opportunities and experience are sufficient to incline them to view the implications of concepts such as responsibility, desert, and merit differently, and more expansively, than men. A theory of justice that encompasses our responsibilities to care for one another requires principles that guide relations not only between adults capable of making and honoring commitments but also with those—both adults and children—who *cannot*.

Expanding our focus to include the responsibilities we have in the domestic sphere makes it clear that the framework of justice that we apply to the public sphere is inadequate on its own. The framework of justice, concerned as it is with rights and responsibilities, can describe at best a part of the domestic sphere, and yet is essential precisely in ensuring that those who need care receive it. On the other hand, the virtues of love and altruism seem to describe a larger part of the domestic sphere, but they are limited in their ability to help us understand how the responsibilities of care ought to be distributed. When viewed through a feminist perspective, with the needs and dependencies of the domestic sphere brought to view rather than hidden behind a wall of "privacy," the fundamental principles of justice take on different meanings than they do in traditional theories of justice.

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<sup>32</sup> Virginia Held, "Non-Contractual Society: A Feminist View," in Marsha Hanen and Kai Nielsen, eds., *Science, Morality, and Feminist Theory*, Supplementary Volume 13, *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* (University of Calgary Press, 1987), 111-37; Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 283-84.



*Equality* The fundamental principle of justice is that of equality. When the realities of interdependence and responsibility for caregiving are prioritized over the ideal of independence, it is clear that equality for women cannot mean only the absence of overt discrimination promised by gender neutrality. Equality requires that the burdens and rewards of caregiving, as well as the burdens and rewards of other occupations and social responsibilities, not be disproportionately distributed by gender or any other suspect category, including class and race.<sup>33</sup>

*Autonomy* The ideal of autonomy suggests that the institutional structure of society must ensure that everyone has at least some opportunity to step away from the responsibilities of care, to choose and pursue their own ends. This realm of autonomy can never be fully shielded from the realm of care, as the ideology of the separate spheres implies; a just society will be ordered in a way that facilitates movement between the two for all its members.<sup>34</sup> The ideal of autonomy does not imply the equalization of resources, opportunities, or capabilities, but rather the guarantee of the minimal resources necessary for individuals to pursue their own ends consistent with their innate abilities and with a similar degree of autonomy for others over their own lives

*Anti-Exploitation* Viewed from a feminist perspective, the concept of exploitation shifts from a focus on preventing the exploitation of “crazies” by “lazies,” to redressing

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<sup>33</sup> Carol Pateman, “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy,” in Anne Phillips, ed., *Feminism and Equality* (New York University Press, 1987), 103-26; Okin, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*; Fraser, “After the Family Wage;” and Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor,” *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 18 (1992:1), pp. 1-43.

<sup>34</sup> Clement, *Care, Autonomy, and Justice*, p. 86.

the exploitation of unpaid and low-paid caregivers by those who are able to avoid a fair share of care work.<sup>35</sup> The implications of this understanding of exploitation for the structure of social institutions is discussed in part two below. The implication for theories of justice and citizenship is that theories that prioritize one form of exploitation to the exclusion of the other violate gender equality. If the principle of reciprocity, which looms large in arguments against an *unconditional* basic income,<sup>36</sup> imposes duties on citizens to reciprocate for the benefits of social cooperation in the sphere of paid employment, for example, it must impose similar duties to reciprocate for the benefits of social cooperation in the sphere of care as well.

*Reciprocity* Once the sphere of care is included in our understanding of social cooperation, the principle of reciprocity loses the punitive character that it has in much of the basic income debate. The first care we all receive, as infants and children, is given unconditionally out of love, not according to any distributional principle, and not in the expectation that it will be repaid. There is no way to reciprocate directly for this care, because it is a gift our parents or caregivers have already received from others. But it can be reciprocated socially—to our own children, or to others in need of care. Rather than implying a *selective* duty for the poor to work in return for redistributive benefits—the policy outcome of Rawls’, Dworkin’s, and White’s theories of justice and citizenship—the feminist principle of reciprocity suggests that we all reciprocate for the care we all receive, and do so unconditionally, in the manner in which the care we received was

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<sup>35</sup> Fraser, “After the Family Wage,” p. 62; Carole Pateman, “Democratizing Citizenship: Some Advantages of a Basic Income,” in Erik Olin Wright, ed., *Redesigning Distribution: Basic Income and Stakeholder Grants as Cornerstones for an Egalitarian Capitalism* (Verso, 2006), pp. 111-12.

<sup>36</sup> See, e.g., White, *Civic Minimum*.

given. The feminist principle of reciprocity suggests that support of children and others who cannot support themselves ought to be a social, rather than a private responsibility.

*Pluralism* Most importantly, a feminist perspective suggests the importance of giving material substance to the ideal of pluralism, the ability of individuals to have a voice in the development of social norms and the ability to contest those norms. What we take to be “normal” cannot be the result of one group’s dominance over another, as is currently the case with prevailing androcentric norms of what it means to be a contributing member of society.<sup>37</sup> The just society will ensure that all its members have an effective voice in the allocation of social resources to different ends and in the valuation of different ways of life. To achieve this, individuals must have the means to make different life choices and to contribute by their example to our collective understanding of the “normal” balance of paid work, caregiving, and leisure.<sup>38</sup>

*Solidarity* The principle of solidarity, implicit in the liberal egalitarian tradition but often neglected, particularly in the American context, suggests that gender equality cannot be achieved for one class of women at the expense of another, as is often implicit in the universal breadwinner model. Greater opportunities for women and men to combine care work with paid employment must not be predicated upon the availability of

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<sup>37</sup> Ailsa McKay, “Why a Citizens’ Basic Income? A Question of Gender Equality or Gender Bias,” *Work, Employment and Society*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2007), pp. 337-48.

<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth Gross, “What is Feminist Theory?” in Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Gross, eds., *Feminist Challenges, Social and Political Theory* (Northeastern University Press, 1986), pp. 190-204., and Iris Marion Young, “Mothers, Citizenship, and Independence: A Critique of Pure Family Values,” *Ethics* 105 (1995: 3): 535-56.

low-paid care services provided by the most vulnerable members of society, who must in turn depend on the unpaid work of other women to provide them with care services.<sup>39</sup>

## 6. Conclusion

Theories of distributive justice that limit or prioritize the distribution of resources according to androcentric forms of contribution, work, or responsibility, fail to treat women with equal respect. A feminist theory of distributive justice would recognize and reward what is traditionally “women’s work” in parity with what is traditionally men’s work. It further suggests that the responsibility to reciprocate cannot be conceived solely in terms of reciprocating with “men’s work” for the benefits bestowed by men’s work, but also in terms of reciprocating for “women’s work”—particularly, but not only for the intensive time and effort required by childrearing. If men are thought to “own” themselves at adulthood, and therefore the fruits of their labor, it can only be, as Susan Moller Okin points out, by willfully ignoring the mother’s entitlement to the fruits of *her* labors.<sup>40</sup> Children have no entitlement to the care they receive that can be explained by either the libertarian theory of justice or any egalitarian theory of justice that depends heavily on a notion of responsibility for one’s choices. What adults are capable of achieving depends enormously on the nurturing they receive by way of gift in their childhood years; if there is a duty to reciprocate for anything, surely it is for these wholly unearned gifts, without which human life and flourishing are impossible. The entitlement of children to the care they receive can, however, be accounted for in an egalitarian theory of justice based on a substantive equality of resources, and this is, I suggest, the

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<sup>39</sup> Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work.”

<sup>40</sup> Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family*, pp. 74-88.

foundation of a feminist theory of distributive justice, in which an unconditional basic income plays a central role, but whose larger details remain to be fully developed.