The Pathology of Care

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Abstract:

This research explores two conflicting ethical systems. Neoliberalism's foundations support an overarching ethic of individual autonomy and individual responsibility. Institutionalism contrasts this conception with a view of human beings as relational. The ethical foundation of such a view requires a meta-ethic of interpersonal responsibility that supports an ethic of care.

"Millions of years of evolution have designed us to live and think as community members.
Within a mere two centuries we have become alienated individuals.
Nothing testifies better to the awesome power of culture." (Harari, 2014, 403-404)

All humans possess the capacity for selfishness or at least, self-interested behavior, as well as the capacity for communal care, the drive for survival of self and the drive for survival of family and community. That individuals within any given context exhibit behavior, which appears to tip in one direction as primarily either selfish or other-regarding, speaks to the institutional configuration of that context – which social institutions were dominant during the period and the underlying assumptions about human nature of those institutions. Capitalism as a system of social provisioning is justified by the insistence on autonomy as the natural state of humans. Our argument is a simple extension of that logic: the instinct and ethic of care stands counter to and is utterly antithetical – pathological – to neoliberalism.

After a brief discussion of methodology we begin with an examination of the culturally specific theories of human behavior assumed by the economics discipline, starting with Veblen's critique of the mainstream neoclassical characterization of human nature. We then proceed by introducing Veblen's alternative theory of behavior through his alternative theory of human nature. Next, from the foundation of an instinct of care, we explore how care evolves from that instinctual base into an ethic of care, which further informs and sustains interactions, relations, and cultural and social systems writ large. We contrast this instinct and ethic of care against the state of autonomy.

We next demonstrate that neoliberalism *as an ideology* presupposes that autonomy and the instinct of self-preservation dominates human nature, and actively encourages and congratulates individuals for exercising self-interested behavior. Moreover, we contend that

autonomy and the ethic of self-interest become hegemonic within neoliberalism. Indeed, we conclude that neoliberalism doesn't just run counter to the instinct of care: neoliberalism as an ethical system is so relentlessly and evangelically individualist that the ideology leaves little room in the public sphere for care of others.

1. Ideology, Dualisms and their Critique

This paper is about the ideology of neoliberalism as it affects perceptions of what is right and proper behavior in our society. We recognize that ideological conceptions of proper behavior are not necessarily representations of actual behavior. However, to the degree that people accept an ideology it becomes both a guide to appropriate behavior and practice and often, a guide to acceptable public policy. Neoliberalism is such an ideology and we argue, the dominant ideology in our culture with respect to defining appropriate behavior, practice, and policy. Our interest is in the consequences of the belief structure for public perceptions of care. We see the ideology as inhibiting of caring behavior generally and limiting the ability to produce and deliver care in an effective and socially just manner.

Ideologies grow out of preexisting social belief structures. The foundation of neoliberal ideology develops from a limited perspective of eighteenth century classic liberal philosophy as does mainstream economics.[1] Feminist critics have argued that the foundation of this body

[1] We prefer the term mainstream to neoclassical for two reasons. First, the term was coined by Thorstein Veblen but used in a manner different from current usage. Second, Tony Lawson (2013) has convincingly argued that contemporary usage is confusing and inconsistent.

of thought is based on a system of gendered dualisms that they have thoroughly critiqued. (Bordo, 1987; Nicholson, 1986; Jennings 1992, 1993; Waller and Jennings, 1990; Nelson 1995, 2003, 2016) Dualisms are bifurcations of reality into two categories that are completely separate but taken together to encompass the totality of the realm of reality they reference. As Bordo (1987) argues these dualisms develop from a basis in Descartes' mind/body dualism and the system of related dualisms he ascribed to it in his ordering of reality; including his gendering of the mind as masculine and the body as feminine. The Western intellectual tradition has added to Descartes dualisms.[2] Of particular interest for our analysis are gendered dualisms including: masculine/feminine, autonomous/dependent, separative self/soluble self, self-interested/altruistic, and of course public/private (which has a complex history, see

[2] For a thorough institutionalist, feminist critique of these dualisms, see Jenning 1992. Jennings (1992, 1993) and Nelson (1996, 1999, 2016) have similarities in their analyses of the structures of dualisms in Western society. Nelson focuses primarily on gender dualisms where each side of the dualism contains a quality, one currently favored, the other not. She argues there are both positive and negative connotations to each quality and that in breaking down the gender dualisms we should stress the positive connotations and benefit from them while suppressing the negative connotations that serve as the basis for invidious distinctions. Jennings alternately considers the possibility that there are no positive connotations to the less favored or dominated side of the dualism and thus resolution is not an option; the only response it to completely reject the dualism as a measure of human value. Consider racial dualisms: white people/people of color; master race/subjugated race; master/slave; fully human/subhuman. When we see this as an interlinked system of dualisms there is no positive connotations contained in these invidious distinctions, instead there is a rationalization for genocide.

Nicholson, 1986). The institutionalist and some feminist economic critiques of dualism and their proposed resolution are actually quite similar.[3] The dualistic separation between the categories is rejected and then often each category is considered as a pole of a continuum where actual behavior or reality falls somewhere between the two polar extremes. (Nelson 1999; 2016, 3)[4] Indeed, we would argue that the feminist critique of these dualisms is so corrosive of neoliberal ideology's structure that it challenges the very foundations of neoliberalism. As such the feminist critique contains the possibility of de-pathologizing care and redefining care in less and eventually non-gendered terms in actual practice.

2. Human Nature[5]

[3] See especially Jennings 1992 and Nelson 2016.

[4] For the institutionalist formulation of this approach see Waller 1989.

[5] All systems of social understanding, and particularly ideologies, have an underlying theory of human nature. All theories of human nature are cultural. The theory of human nature at the foundation of both neoliberalism and contemporary mainstream economics grows out of western European eighteenth century social theory. It is culturally specific and deeply gendered. The "human" in eighteenth century social theory is white, male and from a dominant western society; everyone else is dualistically defined in opposition to this dominant Western man as a less human "other." This dualism is just part of a system of related dualistic constructions which characterize the cultural understanding of society in the West. (Bordo, 1987; Nicholson, 1986) It is the critique of this system of dualisms, especially the male/female and public/private dualistic constructions, and alternatives to this system of dualisms that are of central theoretical concern in this paper. (Jennings, 1992, 1993; Waller and Jennings 1990; Nelson, 1995, 2003, 2016)

All ideologies have at their foundation a theory regarding the character of human nature. The character of human nature that each ideology espouses has direct implications for what behavior is viewed as emergent from that nature. Thus each ideology has at its foundation a conception of what does and does not constitute natural behavior. Behavior consistent with the conception of human nature is natural. Behavior that does not emerge from that conception of human nature is unnatural and indeed, is often considered pathological.

Different theories of human nature have different types of ethical theories. Eighteenth century natural law discourse, upon which mainstream economics and as a result neoliberal ideology is based, argues human nature is essentially a divine endowment of fixed characteristics. Ethics and ethical behavior are beliefs and behaviors consistent with that human nature. Thus universal ethics emanate from the innate characteristic of human nature. In contrast Veblen's theory posits that human nature is biologically determined in the sense that instincts motivate behavior. However ethics and ethical behavior are determined culturally. Since care is a biological necessity in all human experience that experience can lead to social valuation of caring behavior as both necessary and desirable. From this practice and the social valuation attached to it can emerge an ethic of care. Unlike the absolute and universal ethics implicit in the eighteenth century natural law framework, Veblen's "instrumental" ethics if you will, are culturally relative and in no way universal or inevitable.

We begin this discussion of human nature by exploring a critique of mainstream orthodox economics' individualistic notion of *homo economicus*. It is important to consider this critique because neoliberal ideology draws its theoretical core from mainstream economics. The characterization of society as made up of autonomous, self-interested economic agents whose every behavior is oriented toward achieving their exogenously determined wants and maximizing their utility through making free and unfettered choices in

competitive markets is an unrealistic assumption to be charitable. It ignores all social influences on the formation of wants. All goals are strictly individual. The experience of the autonomous, self-interested agent is completely unrelated to their cultural or social circumstance. The structure of actual markets in which people actually do their purchasing and sell their labor rarely approximate the theoretical ideal necessary to rendering the tidy efficiency results of the orthodox model. This asocial disconnect gave rise to Veblen's scathing characterization and critique of economic man. If this remained the asocial fantasy of mainstream economists, if it had no actual social implications for the real world beyond the conversation of professional economists about their models, then very few people would have cause for concern. But mainstream economics has been the core of neoliberal ideology since that ideology's initial formulation as documented by Philip Mirowski (2013). Neoliberal ideology is the functioning ideology in much of the world. It is based on this notion of the autonomous, self-interested individual and it functions to frame all social discourse in neoliberal societies and thus influences conceptions of normal and proper behavior, as well as the limits what can be considered as economic and social policy. If this were not the case we could content ourselves by critiquing economic orthodoxy—which has been done capably by innumerable different heterodox traditions (mostly falling on deaf ears socially). To affect neoliberal culture the critique has to be thoroughly cultural and social and speak to the actual structuring of behavior in neoliberal societies. Thus we must necessarily move from mere critique of mainstream, orthodox theory to a critique of the impacts of that theory on the actual structuring of behavior in neoliberal society.

Neoliberalism, among its tenets, postulates a very specific and gendered vision of human nature. Men in particular are self-interested to put it simply and they proceed in the service of this self-interest in highly atomistic, individualistic terms. This conception, part of the eighteenth century origins of mainstream economics, is often assumed as a self-evident truth.

It is a part of a very simplistic argument in favor of autonomy. Veblen critiqued this conception and argued the main failing of [mainstream] economics "… seems to lie in a faulty conception of human nature … In all the received formulations of economic theory … the human material with which the inquiry is concerned is conceived in hedonistic terms; that is to say, in terms of a passive and substantially inert and immutably given human nature." (Veblen, 1990a, 73) The character of "economic man" is described by Veblen and warrants consideration.

> The hedonistic conception of man is that of a lightning calculator of pleasures and pains, who oscillates like a homogeneous globule of desire of happiness under the impulse of stimuli that shift him about the area, but leave him intact. He has neither antecedent nor consequent. He is isolated, definitive human datum, in stable equilibrium except for the buffets of impinging forces that displace him in one direction or another. Self-imposed in elemental space, he spins symmetrically about his own spiritual axis until the parallelogram of forces bears down upon him, whereupon he follows the line of the resultant. When the force of the impact is spent he comes to rest, a self-contained globule of desire as before. Spiritually, the hedonistic man is not a prime mover. He is not the seat of a process of living, except in the sense that he is subject to a series of permutations enforced upon him by circumstances external and alien to him. (Veblen, 1990a, 73-74)

Of particular importance is economic man "has neither antecedent or consequent," meaning that economic man has no history or cultural context, or even other people, that help to structure or affect his choices; nor do his actions have any resulting impact on history or culture or anyone else. "He is isolated, definitive human datum," meaning he is a non-cultural creature of wants that are given, apparently with no source or causal mechanisms of interest that might structure or otherwise affect his preferences. This damning

characterization of human nature precludes the human relations that must necessarily constitute caring as influencing, much less motivating, behavior. Indeed this characterization essentially defines such relationships as unnatural. We next introduce a conception of human nature, drawn from the work of Veblen that expands the possibilities for behavior otherwise motivated.

2.1 Instincts, behavior, and institutions

Veblen's theorizing about care is part of his overall theory of human behavior. In particular, it emerges from the instinct he refers to as the parental bent. (Veblen, 1990b) Veblen's theory of behavior is heavily dependent on the concepts of culture and of instincts. Instincts fell out of favor in the early twentieth century but have been reclaimed and renamed as adaptations by evolutionary biologists.

In contrast to the neoliberal assumptions about human nature, the institutionalist conception of human nature is combinatory. It has elements of biological foundations in the form of instincts or adaptations as they are currently referred to in evolutionary psychology. But those instincts or adaptations serve only to motivate human behavior. The forms that behavior takes are determined by the cultural context in which a particular person lives.

This is the theory of human behavior of Thorstein Veblen. Veblen believed that human behavior was motivated by instincts,[6] though he had deep reservations about the

[6] This motivation leads to action, but not a particular action unless the response to the motivation, the solution to the problem so defined if you will, was already well understood and a matter of common knowledge in the culture. If not, the individual so motivated would choose a course of action in response to the motivation, the individual searches for a solution to the problem, this is applied intelligence in action. (David Hamilton in Waller, 1982, 765) If the course of action is effective in responding to the motivating problem, then the individual

repeats that procedure or action each time the motivating instinct or adaptation is triggered by the environmental stimulus. If this happened frequently enough the action might become a habitual response to the motivation. (see Hodgson, 1997, 2004a and 2004b; Waller, 1988; 2016, 86-87; Lawson, 2015) This of course would be an individual's habit. Such behaviors are shared with other members of the same culture, acculturation, or members of other cultures, enculturation and diffusion. When the behaviors are believed and demonstrated to be efficacious they will be adopted. Eventually they become part of the symbolically systematic behavior of a culture, become embedded in the language, material and symbolic cultural equipment of each member of the culture and become "settled habits of thought common to the generality of men "what Veblen called institutions in "The Limitations of Marginal Utility." (Veblen, 1990a, 239) Veblen is more expansive in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. He writes: "Institutions must changes with changing circumstances, since they are the nature of an habitual method of responding to stimuli which these changing circumstances afford… The institutions are, in substance, prevalent habits of thought with respect to particular relations and particular functions of the individual and the community; and the scheme of life, which is made up of the aggregate of institutions in force at a given time or at a given point in the development of any society, may, on the psychological side, be broadly characterized as a prevalent spiritual attitude or a prevalent theory of life." (Veblen, 1934, 190)

concept of instincts.[7,8] The structure of human behavior develops because some element of the environment triggers an instinct or adaptation forming the motivation. Responding to this motivation is a problem to be solved in the form of appropriate human behavior. That appropriate behavior either needs to be discovered or drawn from the existing cultural repertoire of appropriate solutions to the problem.

Of significance for our purpose is the character of human instincts or adaptations envisioned by Veblen as the source of motivation for behavior. Of particular importance is the instinct Veblen called the parental bent.[9] The relationship between the parental bent and care has recently been explored by Cumbers, Davis and McMasters (2015) who do much of the intellectual heavy lifting for establishing an institutionalist tradition for theorizing care by pointing to Thorstein Veblen's identification of the parental bent as one of the instincts that motivates human behavior. They note that: "The parental bent is explicitly other-regarding and far broader that the 'mere proclivity to the achievement of children.'" (Cumbers, Davis

[7] There are only a few economists who have paid attention to evolutionary biology but Paula England, Nancy Folbre, and Carrie Leana (2012, 26-27) have explicitly made the link from instincts or adaptations as a biological foundation to the motivations for care.

[8] Of course instinct theory has a checkered history. While Veblen chose instinct psychology over the associationist psychology of his day he was aware that there was controversy over its use. (Waller, 2017, 3) See especially (Veblen, 1990b, 1-2). Despite his reservations Veblen continued to use the concept of instinct and on reflection considered his work on instinct his only important contribution to economic theory. (Dorfman, 1934, 324)

[9] It is important to note that Veblen argued that all humans possess the instinct of the parental bent. This is not part of the tradition of relegating care to women because they presumable have a special, exclusively feminine proclivity or capacity for care.

and McMasters, 2015, 584; citing Veblen, 1990b, 16) They characterize Veblen's use of the parental bent as undeveloped in his work but note that it anticipates much contemporary care theory.

The parental bent was the last instinct introduced in Veblen's work. This instinct is more than the motivation to procreate that Veblen thought was almost reflex-like. Instead for Veblen, as mentioned above, it was the proclivity "to the achievement of children" and "a primary element in the practical working out of parental solicitude." (Veblen, 1990b, 26) Importantly Veblen argued that this solicitude was extended beyond the scope of children to a general solicitude toward the well-being of the entire community: "… this instinctive disposition has a large part in the sentimental concern entertained by nearly all persons for the life and comfort of the community at large, and particularly for the community's future welfare." (Veblen, 1990b, 27)

Veblen's discussion suggested that the parental bent is built up upon the disposition to reproduce, success at which involves the subsequent care of the offspring in humans (and many other species). The closeness of the relationship to the instinct of workmanship and the argument that the parental bent somehow extends to the community as a whole suggest that these proclivities may have biological instincts as their foundation, but that much more has been added by subsequent experience, learning, and acculturation.

With this theory of human nature leading to human behavior in a cultural context we can begin to see that this theory of human nature moves us away from the individualistic, primarily male gendered notion of human nature characteristic of the neoliberal mindset. This allows us to consider behavior characterized by care that supports and reinforces a social ethic of care.

2.2 Care

In their recent article in the *Journal of Economic Issues*, Andrew Cumbers, John Davis and Robert McMasters make the overlap of interests, between theorists of care and institutional economists clear.[10] (Cumbers, Davis and McMasters, 2015) The authors locate care as a neglected aspect of social provisioning in institutional economics.[11] (Veblen, 1990c; Gruchy, 1987; Nelson, 1993; Powers, 2004) They argue that care is grossly undervalued and that austerity programs increase the need for care thereby expanding our caring deficit. A similar deficit was identified by Stanfield and Stanfield (1997) when they identified a nurturance gap in capitalist societies. Their point is neoliberal capitalism requires care to sustain itself. A care deficit is also identified and explored in detail by Joan Tronto (2013).

There are as many definitions of care as there are theorists and commentators on the nature of care. Francesca Cancian and Stacey Oliker define care as the "feelings of affection and responsibility combined with actions [that] provide responsively for an individual's personal needs or well-being, in a face-to-face relationship." (Cancian and Oliker, 2000, 2) This definition captures the affective quality of care and combines it with action. But it neglects all activities that support the face-to-face relationship. This omission is addressed by

[10] The economics of care has blossomed into a vibrant area of scholarly interests. This is a recent phenomenon emerging from the feminist economics movement. The focus on *homo economicus* and the emphasis on market (public) behavior relegated care to the household (private) and kept care from being explicitly considered except on a very limited basis. (Becker, 1991) Two early exceptions are Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1994) and Thorstein Veblen. (Veblen, 1990b) We focus on Veblen's work in what follows.

[11] Veblen first referred to the economy as a process of provisioning in 1901. (Veblen 1990c, 285) It has been used as the definition of economics in institutional economics since. (Gruchy 1987, 17-24) Julie Nelson introduced the term into Feminist economics in 1993.

Nancy Folbre and Erik Olin Wright who categorize the activity of care into three different types: *Interactive care* which include "activities in which concern for the well-being of the care recipient is likely to affect the quality of the services performed in interaction with that person." (Folbre and Wright, 2012, 4-5) This includes the face-to-face, hands on care in Cancian and Oliker's definition. *Support care* includes "services undertaken to enable interactive care." (Folbre and Wright, 2012, 5) And *supervisory care* which adds to the definition of care the act of "being available or on call to interrupt other activities and provide interactive care." (Folbre and Wright, 2012, 4) Folbre and Wright stress care as both activities and as a state of being. The affective quality is de-emphasized. They state: "Our categorization … calls attention to both the labor process and the direct beneficiary of service provided." (Folbre and Wright, 2012, 5)

Julie Nelson has developed a feminist economist's perspective on care that directly attacks the gendered character of care in our society. She argues, "…care is an indispensable element of economic activity." (Nelson, 2016, 2) She (along with Nancy Folbre) critiqued the characterization of care as motivated either by love (altruism) or money (self-interest). She has noted that quality care *can* be motivated by both if the care and the monetary compensation are framed in such a way that neither the care activity nor the caregiver is commodified. (Folbre and Nelson, 2000; Nelson 1999) She argues that it is crucial that we recognize that "care work is *work*" and that it requires time and effort. Thus it can "only be maintained when it is allocated serious economic resources of time and money." (Nelson, 2016, 3) She also suggests recovering and reclaiming the term "husbandry" to "evoke and promote a masculine-associated ethic and practice of care" to counter the feminization of care in our gendered society. (Nelson, 2016, 2)

To this point we have described care as having three manifestations. There is care as an activity as stressed by Folbre and Wright. We use the term care in this sense when we are

referring to who does the caring work and who shoulders the responsibility for the performance of that work. There is care as an ethic. We use care in this sense when we are talking about social valuation and motives to action. Specifically instinct as a motive for solving a particular problem where caring work is the cultural solution to that problem. In institutional economics this makes caring into a problem of social valuation. There is also care as an emotion as described by Cancian and Oliker. Care manifest as emotion is ably discussed by Folbre and Nelson. (2000, 129-133) We do not specifically take up of this manifestation of care as an emotion.

Of particular interest for our purposes, Cumbers, Davis and McMasters recently argued that Joan Tronto's highly influential definition of care (Tronto, 1993, 2013) has a strong affinity to the social value principle articulated by John Dewey and supported by Warren Samuels and Marc Tool. (Cumbers, Davis and McMasters, 2015, 585)

Joan Tronto devised a definition of care (with Berenice Fisher) that she deployed in presenting her argument that it would enhance women's political impact and participation if society embraced an ethic of care. That definition is:

> On the most general level, we suggest that care be viewed as a *species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible.* That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web. (Tronto, 1993, 103 italics in original)

Notice at the beginning of the definition it is expressly non-individualistic; defining care as a species activity. This corresponds to Veblen's notion of care emerging from the parental bent, an instinct or adaptation, which is part of the biological hardwiring that all human beings share and that extends beyond the parent-child dyad. The end of the definition describes the human condition involving the weaving of a complex, life-sustaining web,

hearkening back to Ruth Benedict's famous characterization of culture, often interpreted by institutionalists, as woven from institutions.

But beyond these Veblenian notes the real tie to institutionalism is through the similarities to the social value principles articulated by institutionalists and that are embedded in Tronto. In particular, the injunction that we maintain, continue and repair our world hearkens to C. E. Ayres' "keeping the machines running." (Ayres, 1978, 223) But more substantively is the correlation with Marc Tool's social value principle. Tool writes:

> Do or choose that which provides for the continuity of human life and the noninvidious re-creation of community through the instrumental use of knowledge. (Tool, 1995, 23)

Cumbers, Davis and McMasters note that the "continuity" in Tool's social value principle has an "obvious correspondence to Tronto's references to 'maintain' and 'continue.' There are reproductive and moral imperatives inherent in both." (Cumbers, Davis and McMasters, 2015, 586) Both definitions focus on the continuity of life (Tool) and the maintenance of the environment in which that life is maintained, continued, and repaired (Tronto) with Tool adding environmental compatibility into his corollaries to his social value principle. (Tool, 1979) Noninvidiousness mentioned in both Tool's principle and his corollaries is implicit in considering caring as a species activity (Tronto).

Tronto argues that adequate care recognizes that human beings exist in relation to others. Care is fundamentally a relational activity. It involves a complex, interrelated series of actions including: attention to the needs of others; accepting responsibility for meeting those needs; acting to fulfill those needs, and relational reciprocation with those receiving care. (Tronto, 1993, 105-108) Within caregiving competence of the caregiver is required to sustain an ethic of care. (Tronto, 1993, 133-34) This corresponds to acting on the basis of the instrumental use of knowledge and the corollary of acting with instrumental efficiency in

Tool. (Tool, 1979, 300-306) Tool in his corollaries stresses the importance of democratic processes. (Tool, 1979) Tronto in her recent book (2013) argues for democratic caring as a prerequisite for a just society.

We can see that there is a strong connection between the social value principle of Marc Tool and Joan Tronto's definition of care. Tronto makes the explicit ethical connection when she argues that a good person or good society practices care.

> To be a morally good person requires, among other things, that a person strives to meet the demands of caring that present themselves in his or her life. For a society to be judged as a morally admirable society, it must, among other things, adequately provide for care of its members and its territory. (Tronto, 1993, 126)

Tronto then argues that the elements of an ethic of care include: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness. (Tronto, 1993, 127) Tronto argues that it would be good if an ethic of care were elevated to a primary ethical principle in our society.

Institutionalism makes a stronger claim. First, Veblen argues that care is an instinct based activity—a necessary, genetic disposition that expands to its social manifestation through practice, the development of habits of thought and action, and their cultural diffusion to society as a whole. Second, Tool and others (particularly Foster) argue that instrumental valuation is a social inevitability.[12] (Waller, 2013, 1006) As a consequence, if a culture is to survive and thrive it must necessarily adopt some form of an ethic of care.

Tronto's analysis directly attacks neoliberalism by rejecting the gendered public/private dualism that assigns all caring responsibility to the private aspect of family life

[12] Foster's argument is that for a society to continue to exist it must solve its pressing social problems thus requiring that it engage in successful pragmatic problem solving, which is the core of instrumental valuation.

thereby limiting the social input and assignment of responsibility to highly gendered familial relations and supporting the "provisioning and protection passes" (essentially excuses for not providing care) she identifies. Similarly, she sees a limited rather than all encompassing role for market processes in the assignment of caring responsibilities and the provision of care. In her discussion she describes the impact of behavior structured through market institutions. In doing so she seems to give markets themselves agency. However, we understand that her as arguing that people's behavior structured through markets takes on a collective character. Thus she argues that the market system presumes the individual character of caring responsibility for the provision of care. Market structured behavior reinforces (when it does not actually create) the individualistic character of contemporary caring through several mechanisms. Market structured behavior assumes every individual has the same capacity to assess needs and provide care. (Tronto, 2013, 118) The underlying ethical structure justifying market behavior reinforces the "passes" on caring responsibility and the public/private dualism. Market processes fail at pricing the public good character of caring and taking into account of externalities. (Tronto, 2013, 115; see Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2015, 411) Market outcomes reinforce existing structural inequalities and existing hierarchies. (Tronto, 2013, 122-128; see Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2015, 411) Finally, Tronto notes the market processes are not based upon and therefore ignore the relational character and the time dimension of caring. (Tronto, 2013, 121-122) As all productive effort is pulled into the market nexus the fact that caring takes time is ignored. (Tronto, 2013, 121; see Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz, 2015, 409) If neoliberalism rejects an ethic of care, which transcends individual acts, what ethics and motivations does it support?

2.3 Autonomy

Autonomy is a state of being or a condition of life. It conceptually grows out of an individualistic conception of human beings; what Paula England called "the separative self." (England, 2003) This is a cultural and gendered theory of human nature and action. This theory of human nature is the foundation of the assumption that the ideal state for a person is one of personal autonomy and it supports ethics of self-interest and personal, individual responsibility for acts and their consequences. Certainly self-interest has survival value and would have a foundation in instinctual or adaptive behavior. Similarly, personal responsibility is a desirable ethical principle. However, within neoliberalism this ethic of personal responsibility takes on the role of a theory of cause and effect with regard to all human activity. A person's situation in life is determined by their individual actions. This supports the corollary that whatever someone's situation might be it is the result of their prior actions. There is, in this theory of behavior, no causation related to history or context.

As an accurate reflection of human life as it has occurred historically and empirically the highly individualistic, separative self-conception of the autonomous individual fails completely. Human beings are relational. We are social and cultural creatures. Our lives begin with a dyadic relationship with our mother that continuously expands into a network of relationships that define us and structure our behavior within the context of those relationships. Much of our activity is directed at sustaining and expanding those relationships. This is done partially by continuous providing and receiving care. The need for care is both ubiquitous and a universal fact-of-life for humans. From these facts of human experience we can reject the conception of people as merely autonomous, self-interested individuals as a basis for theorizing.

Just as an ethic of self-interest supports autonomous action by individuals, an ethic of care supports relational activity among individuals. Autonomy as a state of being fosters an ethic of personal responsibility—certainly a desirable attribute. Similarly, people in healthy

and supportive relationships with one another, characterized by equality and respect, can foster an ethic of care—again, a desirable attribute.[13] Certainly the richness of human experience has room for both, indeed, humans seem to have instinctual elements for both. But neoliberalism valorizes individual autonomy and self-interest and asserts it normative superiority while treating care, which as an activity brings human dependency and fragility into focus, as a sign of personal weakness and defect. Within neoliberalism care is tolerated when one person individually, as an act of personal responsibility or charity, takes care of another (or when caring services are provided in markets). But care as a social activity based on collective social responsibility, is seen as fostering dependency and as such is pathological in the public sphere. Thus social or public caring responsibility is outside the realm of neoliberal conceptions of normal or desirable behavior or policy.

3 Neoliberalism

Mainstream economics is historically implicated in the rise of neoliberalism. The two are not identical, but related and in the modern era coincident. This historical relationship has been carefully explored. In particular, Van Horn and Mirowski (2009) trace the influence of the Chicago School of Economics to the founding of neoliberalism as an explicit doctrine dating it to 1947. They trace the simultaneous and synergistic evolution of the Chicago School of Economics and the Mont Pelerin Society (which spawned and provided the intellectual support for the neoliberal political movement). (Van Horn and Mirowski, 2009, 158-163) They describe how "the extent to which the dual start-ups of the two landmarks of the history of postwar neoliberal thought were intimately connected. (Van Horn and Mirowski, 2009, 158) They note that: "The ultimate purpose of institutions such as the

[13] People in relationships, even caring relationships because they necessarily involve power differentials, can also lead to domination.

[Mont Pelerin Society] and the Chicago School [of Economics] was not so much to revive a dormant classical liberalism as it was to forge a neoliberalism better suited to modern conditions." (Van Horn and Mirowski, 2009, 160) Mirowski does point out that mainstream economics and neoliberalism diverge on some issues. (Mirowski, 2013, 335-336)

Neoliberal ideology is deeply gendered. The neoliberal individual is characterized by traits that are attributed to and considered natural for men acting in the public sphere.[14] This reflects the masculine character of behavior assumed in mainstream economic theorizing. Behavior not conforming to this masculine ideal is gendered feminine and relegated to the private sphere. Neoliberalism as an ideology valorizes autonomy as a state of being and ethics of self-interest and personal responsibility exclusively. It crowds out of the public sphere an ethic of care. Both Veblen and Tronto (and Adam Smith 1937) argue a public ethic of care is necessary for a good society. We next consider the consequences of the neoliberal theory of human nature and behavior on society.

3.1 **Neoliberalism as ideology**

Neoliberalism is the prevailing ideological operant of the most recent stage in the evolution of monopoly capitalism over the last five decades. Neoliberalism embodies the ideological shift in the purpose of the state from one that has a responsibility to insure full employment and protect its citizens against the exigencies of the market to one that has a responsibility to insure protection of the market itself. (Harvey, 2005)

[14] Specifically, it is white, prime-aged, healthy, boss men with money to whom the idea of "natural" autonomy applies. This characterization of natural behavior is not only gendered, but is also racial and classed. We are grateful to one of the referees for making this observation.

The neoliberal narrative consists of three well-defined tropes: privatization of currently state provided goods and services, de-regulation of industry, and retrenchment of the welfare state. (Dumenil and Levy, 2011) All three reinforce a central premise: the locus of control is the individual exercising agency through (free) market operations. The tropes of privatization and de-regulation both argue that erecting a wall between government and business creates a more efficient market economy; private industry is brought to heel by competitive market forces – market forces that simply represent the aggregate of autonomous, individual decisions. Likewise, the retrenchment of the welfare state erects a wall between the individual and the state, which 'frees' the individual to exercise agency and decide for herself where she wants to reside in the economic hierarchy (Wrenn, 2016).

This analysis of the neoliberal narrative is not meant to suggest that there is a comprehensive and complete 'Neoliberal Agenda' that is actively enforced by maniacal powers-that-be. Rather, what is argued is that the neoliberal narrative consists of a central ideological construct – that of hyper-individualism – upon which the justification of these tropes rests, the consequences of which further legitimize and prioritize market activities above socially integrative activities. Neoliberalism teaches through the socialization process that each individual should be accountable to herself and in so doing; each individual's responsibility to others and to the collective is eroded. Society is then comprised entirely and solely of self-interested, atomistic individuals seeking to forward their own agendas. The emphasis on individual accountability and responsibility naturally segues into the power of the individual acting alone.

The neoliberal narrative consists of this simple, central ideological construct – that of primal individualism – upon which the justification of its core enabling myths rests, such that the consequences of the neoliberal narrative become much greater than the unifying principle on which it stands. The ethos of primal individualism systematically dismantles the power of

collective action for the general population while protecting the power of collective action among and across corporate entities, industries, or the interests of capital writ large.

3.2 Disembedding of the economic; disintegration of the social

Within neoliberalism, the economic sphere dominates. Natural law, natural rights are contextualized and as such redefined through economic terms - the natural workings of the market. Likewise with the concepts of liberty, democracy, freedom - all of which transcend economic systems and pre-date the rise of industrialization and capitalism - are thus cast as essentially economic. The essence of liberty, democracy, freedom, and justice is economic and immutably situated within the market. (Brown, 2015)

The institutionalization of the market fundamentally changes the structure of society and in so doing, fundamentally changes the institutional structures through which individuals are socialized. The expanding economic sphere begins to pervade the everyday lives and thinking of the individual. As such, the socialization process becomes increasingly accommodating to the intensifying market place and the transference of knowledge, tradition, and culture via the social structure all become increasingly tinged by the values of the market.

This increasing momentum of market intensification in the latest stage of capitalism encourages the extraction of the market from the other spheres of social life, in other words, the disembedding of the economic sphere.[15] In following the logic of its own momentum, the

[15] The Polanyian approach employed in this paper does not posit that the market invades the social. Instead the substantivist position is that there are tendencies within the system of self-regulating markets that work to separate from the social realm, which continuously resists and strives to re-embed the economic sphere (those efforts are referred to as the protective response). So in this framework the economic sphere does not invade the social, but instead

economic sphere enlarges eventually encompassing the entirety of social life, subordinating the other spheres of livelihood to support its purpose and further intensification. (Polanyi, 2002) The intensification of the marketplace and market mentality creates a vacuum in the lives of individuals left by the social dislocation created by the disembedded economy and the subordination of social life to the dictates of the market. The concurrent intensification of the market mentality and the continued disembedding of the economy drives an even deeper wedge into the development of personal relationships as anonymity of the market, pecuniary values, and the competition of emulation serve to distance individuals from one another by eroding, preventing, or calling into question social bonds and collective goals. (Stanfield and Stanfield, 1996) Although Polanyi wrote about monopoly capitalism prior to the emergence of neoliberalism, his work, particularly his description and elucidation of the disembedded economy nevertheless describes quite clearly how neoliberalism emerged and continues to evolve (Dale, 2010): the superiority of the individual over the collective is the guiding principle and rallying cry of neoliberalism.

3.3 The neoliberal human

Neoliberalism valorizes autonomy and by extension the ethics of self-interest and personal responsibility. These are certainly important ethical principles in our culture. But in neoliberalism they become hegemonic. Autonomy, self-interest and particularly personal responsibility essentially exhaust the neoliberal conception of normal, natural, and acceptable behavioral motivations. All other ethical principles that guide behavior, especially those that run contrary to the ethic of autonomy are seen as unnatural and indeed, pathological. By

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there is a tension as the economic and social spheres each strive to contain the other and reintegrate. This results in market values subordinating non-market values under neoliberal regimes. But this is always understood to be a contested, ongoing and continuing process.

pathological we mean that other ethical considerations, whether they be care, freedom, equality or justice are only legitimate and natural to the degree they can be reconciled with autonomy. For many of these ethics they are necessarily truncated to be reconciled with autonomy and are discarded when they cannot.

Within the neoliberal ideology, people are taught that individual responsibility represents the pinnacle of justice. As such, neoliberal man is accountable only to himself for no matter what he does, in serving his best interests he serves the common good. Neoliberal man belongs to no greater group than that of other individuals working within their own isolation. "There is no such thing (as society)! There are individual men and women and there are families… people look to themselves first." (Margaret Thatcher, quoted by Douglas Keay, 1987, 9) Society is but a collection of individuals.

The neoliberal human conceived of as an individual – "an isolated human datum." The neoliberal human is detached, disconnected from any larger community, and as such alienated. Alienation is a product of neoliberal capitalism that makes clear the connection between the market and the need for a constructed self-individuation. As the division of labor intensifies and the individual becomes more removed from both process and product, the individual is less able to identify herself with any material contribution to society. Disengagement from social obligations and attachments heightens with the escalation of the market setting. It is this very detachment within the intensified market setting that lends itself to alienation from others. (O'Neill, 1998)

As a counter to the alienation experienced by the individual (and as a measure against the potential for revolt of the working class against the irrationality of neoliberalism), individuals are further socialized into believing that their social context consists of the reified institutions of democracy, freedom, and individual independence. Consider freedom. Within neoliberalism freedom is reduced from a positive notion of freedom where individuals have

the right and ability to think and act in all their social relations absent restraint to the degree that they do not harm others, to a notional concept of freedom where it becomes the right to choose among alternatives within a market. Similarly, equality is reduced to equal rights to choose and participate within that market. Justice is reduced to equational where the balancing of the equation is often reduced to market determined or referenced measures of value. When we consider caring it is, because of its relational character, difficult to reduce to relations between autonomous individuals. But economists in particular have been undeterred; most famously Gary Becker (1993, 286-296) has reduced familial caring relations to autonomous individuals maximizing their family income through time, for example in his so-called "rotten kid" theorem.[16]

But care, when quarantined in the private sphere, can involve the caregiver engaging in temporary motivational displacement. The caregiver temporarily takes up as their motivation the needs of the cared-for. From the perspective of neoliberal ideology (not necessarily reality)[17] there then exists a relationship where the caregiver has abandoned their autonomy and the cared-for, by virtue of their need for care, has already lost their autonomy, at least temporarily.[18] The goal of course, especially in neoliberal culture is the restoration of both the caregiver's and the cared-for's autonomy. So the need for care is fundamentally a pathology to be repaired or overcome. Those whose loss of autonomy is prolonged are

[16] Becker's famous *Treatise on the Family* (1991) is full of such examples.

[17] See Folbre and Nelson on motivation in reality as opposed to ideological conceptions. (Folbre and Nelson, 2000,132-133)

[18] If the care is provided through a market in the public sphere actual motivation is complex. See Folbre and Nelson 2000. But within the nexus of neoliberal ideology such caring labor is provided because of self-interest.

treated as non-participants in the social milieu; they are considered either children or infirm (usually the ill, injured, differently abled or elderly). If the loss of autonomy is not rectified the exclusion can be permanent.

4. The Pathology of Care and Altruism

The apparent contradiction between autonomy and care is largely based on both a confusion in type and the obscured eighteenth century conception of human nature upon which our contemporary vision of that nature is understood. Let us consider the problem of type. Autonomy is a state of being. It is a condition of life. If this condition of life is valorized, then ethical principles flow from it. These include self-interest and personal responsibility. Care is an action, often conceived in terms of a process (a series of actions). It is a response to another state of being, namely dependency.[19] Dependency is normal and the response to dependency, care, has biological origins. From these facts-of-life we derive an ethic of care. Care is obviously relational in character; it always involves at least two people. But autonomy is also relational—it is a relationship between one person and all the others in that person's society that they are not currently dependent upon. The conflict is not between a state of being (autonomy) and an action (care), but instead between two states of being, autonomy and dependency. Within neoliberalism the ubiquitous and inevitable dependency that exists is demonized while autonomy is valorized. It is this ideological position that is incompatibly imagined, which creates the conflict that sees personal responsibility and self-interest as fundamentally incompatible with caring behavior in the public realm.

[19] The dependency of the care receiver is coupled with taking on the responsibility by the caregiver as described by Tronto (1995).

Neoliberalism and mainstream economics contribute to a cultural conception of human nature that is so limited as to ignore natural human responses to dependency and the emergence of an ethic of care. To the neoliberal imagination an ethic of care is foreign and sign of the embrace of incapacity resulting in an unnatural condition of dependency, a position at odds with the eighteenth century origins that spawned it and with contemporary scientific conceptions of human nature.

This ideological position emerges from a misconception of the eighteenth century understanding of human nature particularly the version of it that is thought to come from Adam Smith. In Smith's famous foundational treatise for economics, *The Wealth of Nations* (Smith, 1937) he posits certain propensities of human nature. In particular, he posits propensities for individuals to exchange (Smith, 1937, 13) and to pursue their own interests. (Smith, 1937, 423) These propensities of human nature were taken by subsequent economists as exhaustive of human nature. It is the case that in the *Wealth of Nations* Smith does posit that such behavior increases average incomes and promotes unintentionally social benefits conducive to a good society. But Smith certainly did not think that these propensities were the only moral principles that emerged from human nature. It is clear from a cursory examination of his earlier book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, that he believes that the capacity for empathy and sympathy emerge from human nature as well. (Smith, 1976, 9-16)

In this regard, in his exploration of the Smith's work, Charles Bazerman argues that Smith had a much broader conception of human nature and did not think of society as the sum of the autonomous individuals that makes it up. (Bazerman, 1993) He writes:

> However, attempts to understand … *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* brought attention to a side of Smith that seemed to extend beyond the rational self-calculation libertarian economists attributed to him. Concern for others, critique of rent holders

> and stock investors in *The Wealth of Nations*, imagination of society as something other than a marketplace, recognition of the moral social self, and keen observation of human irrationality provided a new vision of Smith's science of man, displacing *homo economicus* with a much more complex and less predictable being. *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* also pointed towards a social role Smith described as appropriate for the virtuous community elder, moved by prudence, justice and benevolence and in self-command, one that seemed to describe his condition and self-conception … (Bazerman, 1993, 174)

Clearly Smith embraced a much richer range of behaviors emergent from his conception of human nature than the truncated version adopted into economics, savagely critiqued by Veblen, and implicit in neoliberalism.

More modern mainstream thought has not fared much better with respect to care. Consider that caring behavior involves altruistic behavior. Altruism has a complicated history in mainstream economics. In a comprehensive review of the literature on altruism S-C. Kolm (2006) dismisses contemporary mainstream economic analysis of altruism with the following few sentences. "Some adepts of the "dismal science", faced with the sad evidence that human character is not so sad after all, tried to save selfishness in displacing it from *homo economicus* to her genes, and hence became interested in the sociobiological selection of altruism towards kin." (S-C. Kolm, 2006, 53) It was an influential paper by Gary Becker (1976) that stimulated interest in altruism in relation to economic models. There are four basic strategies for dealings with altruistic behavior in mainstream economics. The view among economists, as characterized by Samuelson, is that under individual selection, self-interested behavior would always out compete altruistic behavior with altruism eventually disappearing. (Samuelson, 1993, 143) Given this view the problem to be addressed is how do we reconcile self-interest with the actual presence of persistent altruistic behavior in the

world. Samuelson rejects naïve arguments that altruistic behavior results from a preference for altruism that means rational agents who behave altruistically are actually pursuing their own self-interest. He argues this is an empty tautology. (Samuelson, 1993, 143) So does Herbert Simon. (Simon, 1993, 156)

But earlier attempts to explain altruistic behavior (including care) adopt precisely this naïve view. In 1976 Gary Becker argued that kin selection and group selection were unnecessary for explaining altruism. He states: "I will show that models of group selection are unnecessary, since altruistic behavior can be selected as a consequence of individual rationality." (Becker, 1976, 818) He then argues that altruism can be derived from a utility maximization model in which the altruism is manifest when one agent, who gets utility from being an altruist, transfers income to another agent thereby increasing the utility of the receiving agent while diminishing the altruistic agents utility. He later presents another model where in a community with altruist and egoist, if they maximize their utility, which is made up of their preferences for genetic fitness, then altruism can persist and be selected for even when the altruism is not directed at close kin. But as Samuelson notes all of this is tautologically true. It assumes that altruism is an argument in a utility function (or alternately fitness is an argument in the utility function). That being the case some agents with a taste for either altruism or fitness can survive and even increase their representation in the society. It reproduces results consistent with the sociobiological understanding of his day and it does not require kin selection. What it does not do is consider altruism as a motive for behavior along with or in contrast to self-interest. (Samuelson, 1993, 143)

By way of contrast Samuelson makes an interesting argument that W.D. Hamilton's notion of inclusive fitness ((Hamilton, 1964) allows for the evolutionary development of reciprocal altruism. (Samuelson, 1993, 144) He argues that mutations resulting in altruistic behavior that result in one person acting to enhance the survival of close relatives will

increase in a species population. This will enhance survivability over groups lacking such a mutation. (Samuelson, 1993, 143-144) So he concludes, "…altruism of a kind does have survival value in a competition of genotypes *within* a species. (Samuelson, 1993, 143, italics in original) Samuelson's model is a model of evolutionary selection that assumes the presence of a motive for altruism; he does not suggest that altruistic behavior should be reconceptualized to make it consistent with self-interest.

Also in contrast with Becker is Herbert Simons' argument that agents are motivated by bounded rationality rather than acting purely on the basis of self-interest. Indeed he notes: "What motivates human choice is an empirical question, and neoclassical conclusions that derive from the dubious assumptions that economic motives dominate must be reexamined. (Simons, 1993, 159) He argues that social evolution induces altruistic behavior and that culture dominates. (Simons, 1993, 157, 159) He makes the claim that in evolutionary theory that altruism refers to behavior that reduces one individual's fitness in order to enhance the fitness of others. He makes a simple cost-benefit argument. "If the total contribution of the altruist to the fitness of others is greater than the fitness lost by the altruist, altruism will increase the prospects of the group's surviving in competition with other groups." (Simons, 1993, 156) But he rejects tautological rational choice reasoning and Becker's assertion that altruism does not need to be directed at close kin. Simon argues: "Altruistic genes will thrive only under rather special circumstances. Altruism to close kin (sibling and children) can survive if it makes a sufficient contribution to their fitness, since they share a large fraction of the genes of the altruist and will propagate them. However, altruism to others with whom the altruist does not share a large fraction of genes is unlikely to survive, even if it enhances the fitness of the group as a whole—for while the whole group is growing, the altruist in it will gradually vanish, reducing and then eliminating the groups initial advantage." (Simons, 1993, 156) Thus noting the effect of individual selection within the group described by Samuelson

Theodore C. Bergstrom and Oded Stark illustrate another mainstream approach. They take a game theoretic approach. They look to establish that cooperation can emerge in one-shot prisoner's dilemma games when played by sisters and daughters. Mothers are assumed to either have a genetic predisposition to defect or to cooperate that they pass on to their daughters. The daughter's play one another. The prisoner's dilemma framework is chosen precisely because it is hostile to cooperation. (Bergstrom and Stark, 1993, 149) They show the only dynamically stable equilibrium is one where all sisters cooperate with their sisters. (Bergstrom and Stark, 1993, 149-150) They then complicate this model by looking at one with sexual reproduction and three siblings. There are some equilibriums that favor cooperation. (Bergstrom and Stark, 1993, 151) They then move to increasingly complex versions of the game. Their conclusion:

> "We have studied environments in which an individual gets a higher payoff from defecting than from cooperating and where "copies" of an individual are more likely to appear the higher is her payoff. Even in such unpromising soil, cooperation can persist and flourish. The reason is that both genetic and cultural inheritance are blunt instruments that typically do not operate on individuals in isolation. Those who inherit a genetic tendency to cooperate are more likely than others to enjoy the benefits of cooperative siblings. Similarly with cultural inheritance; altruism can prevail when individuals are likely to interact with others who share the same role model." (Bergstrom and Stark, 1993, 154)

Two important observations about this approach: First, individuals are assumed to have different motivations. We do not have maximizing behavior with a "taste" for cooperation or defecting. Second the goal here is to find games with a structure and rules that allow for cooperation.

These four approaches continued in later work. They have been applied to public goods, the environment, the economics of the family, and the design of games whose rules and structure generate altruistic and/or cooperative results.[21] By inserting altruism into a utility function or showing altruism can be sustained by evolutionary processes mainstream economists are not challenging the placement of altruism or caring behavior inside the private realm. Julie Nelson in her discussion of altruism in marriage argues for an "enlarged domain of theory and models [that] may provide a basis for clearer analysis, [are] less prone to problems of misclassification and misspecification, and [are] more useful for understanding." (Nelson, 1994, 130) The problem that remains in the mainstream framework is that altruism and caring can only arise from individual preferences in a framework of utility maximization, with no allowance for group interests, personal relationships or caring instincts, as such it has not contributed to challenging the dominant, moral imperative, within the public realm, for a hyper-individual self-interest as the only acceptable motive for public behavior. This hyper-individualism continues to undermine any case for collective and relational approaches to a public ethic of care.[22]

Geoffrey Hodgson, building on evolutionary biology describes an institutionalist position that applies to altruism. The position he puts forward builds on the notion of group selection as employed by Darwin and substantiated by Wilson and Sober.[23] (Wilson and Sober, 1994)

[21] For an interesting discussion of the results of experimental economics, especially its rejection of the assumption of self-interest, see (Fehr and Schmidt 2006).

[22] We thank one of the referees for this observation.

[23] Hodgson notes: "Darwin considered dispositions such as 'sympathy, fidelity, and courage' that would advantage one tribe against another in a struggle for existence." (Hodgson, 2012a, 269) Darwin wrote:

But to this he adds the notion of culture and its role in evolution thereby supporting Veblen's earlier description of the character of human behavior as both biological and cultural in character. We find Hodgson's explanation of altruism with its combination of biological and cultural causality more compelling as an explanation for the actual occurrence of caring behavior. Moreover its cultural emphasis in particular strengthens the argument for collective and relational approaches to caring in an integrated social realm. (Hodgson, 2012)

If we consider a more balanced version of human nature there is a role for both autonomy as a state of being and care as an activity or process. It may be very desirable for adult human beings to achieve the capacity to act efficaciously in an independent way. We may favor or valorize the achievement of autonomy by which we mean accepting personal

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> "Selfish and contentious people will not cohere, and without coherence nothing can be effected . . . although a high standard of morality gives but a slight or no advantage to each individual man . . . over the other men of the same tribe . . . an advancement in the standard of morality . . . will certainly give an immense advantage to one tribe over another . . . a tribe including many members who . . . were always ready to give aid to each other and to sacrifice themselves for the common good, would be victorious over most other tribes; and this would be natural selection." (Darwin, 1871, vol. 1, 162-166; in Hodgson 2012, 269)

Hodgson qualifies Darwin's argument by indicating that Darwin's argument was based on group selection. "Hence groups with members that devote themselves to the interests of their group will have an advantage in the struggle for survival. Darwin's evolutionary explanation of moral sentiments (including altruism) relies on group selection, where individual traits that benefit the group are assumed to prosper automatically." (Hodgson, 2012, 269)

responsibility for one's actions and pursuit of one's interest (including survival). This is a cultural choice. But we must also recognize that the human condition is one that inevitably and naturally has periods of dependency (particularly childhood where autonomy has not yet been achieved, periods of illness or injury where autonomy has been temporarily lost, disability where autonomy is limited, and the natural decline in our capacities as we age which may include the incremental loss of some autonomy). In this more balance version, care as an activity and care is an ethic valorizing taking responsibility for others, can be thought of as the actions and processes that lead to the development of autonomy for children, the recovery of autonomy for the ill or injured, and the maintenance of as much autonomy as possible for the disabled and aging. Again, the goal of autonomy is a cultural choice, not a necessity, care however is a biological necessity. As ethics then, care and autonomy are not co-equal.

Within neoliberalism, the public economic sphere dominates society, so that the ethos of individual responsibility is replicated on all subordinate levels and consequently, the inevitable alienation of neoliberal capitalism is replicated throughout all social spheres. The modern citizen's identity is ascribed by the neoliberal ideology whereby previously distinguishing facets of personal identity become subordinate to the agent's neoliberal identity as a citizen accountable to and responsible for no one. (Rawls, 1971) The individual is taught that to have a responsibility for the care of others diminishes one's own identification, constrains the possibilities of the responsible individual who is thereby self-sacrificing her own personal identity. If under neoliberalism the market mentality and economic sphere dominate all other spheres of living, then it stands to reason that collective social identity is circumscribed by neoliberalism as well.

Thus neoliberalism ignores the caring relationships that are a normal and natural element of all human life. Care is universal and endemic. All of us begin our lives requiring care; we

need care periodically throughout our lives to overcome illness and other obstacles; and at the end of life as our physical abilities become compromised, we will again require care. Neoliberal capitalism cannot sustain itself without care. Indeed, Joan Tronto argues that the consensus on human nature, among those exploring an ethic of care (from a feminist perspective), consists of three elements: Human beings are conceived as being in relationships (rather than autonomous). Human beings are vulnerable and fragile. And all human beings are both the recipients and givers of care. (Tronto, 2013, 30-31) She notes that many political theories "…simply *assume the existence of autonomous actors*… From this assumption, such thinkers then see human dependency as a flawed condition or problem." (Tronto, 2013, 31, emphasis in original) Indeed, she later notes that this perspective, foundational in neoliberalism, considers dependency—the need for care—"pathology." (Tronto, 2013, 31, in quotes in the original)

Note that if Tronto's version of human nature is correct and if Veblen (and others) are correct, that care is motivated by instinct or adaptations, then the opposite conclusion is reached – that care is the natural state of the human condition and autonomy is the pathology.[24] This would suggest at least that neoliberalism had embraced a conception of human behavior as normal that is at odds with reality and desirable, necessary behavior.

[24] The valorization of autonomy is a cultural choice. While cultures in which neoliberal ideology holds sway this is a choice people in those cultures have collectively made. Other cultures can and do reject autonomous individualism as a social value.

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