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Husbandry: a (feminist) reclamation of masculine responsibility for care

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While extremely important and revolutionary, much feminist work on the economics of care has risked reinforcing an association of care with *only* women and with *only* women's traditional activities. This article revives the image of 'husbandry', understood as careful cultivation, tending and management, as a complement to the image of mothering. A rich masculine prototype of care may be helpful in reawakening male responsibility for care, and revitalising the recognition of the necessity of concern and carefulness in all of economic life. The 'good husbandman', in stark contrast to 'economic man', lives a fuller life, acting responsively and responsibly. This article lays out the need for such a rich image; suggests applications to the environment, carework and business management; and addresses some possible drawbacks.

Key words: Care, Masculinity, Gender, Husbandry
JEL classifications: A13, B54

1. Introduction

What is the place of care in the economy? Much feminist work so far on the economics of care, while extremely important and revolutionary in its own right, risks implicitly reinforcing an association of care with *only* women and with *only* women's traditional activities. The central image has been one of 'mothering' (Ruddick, 1989; Noddings, 2010). The focus has been on hands-on care of children, the sick and the elderly. Men who participate in hands-on carework, then, while they may be recognised, are treated as somewhat anomalous. What is more, an implicit—and sometimes explicit—belief is expressed that the traditionally masculine realms of business and commerce (as well as sports and warfare) are in some essential way orthogonal to or inimical to care.[1] This article challenges these associations.

Ethics, at their most powerful, originate with and resonate with metaphors, images, myths and narratives that describe who we are and who we should be as people

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[1] For example, sociologist and care theorist Arlie Hochschild (2003, p. 8) repeatedly frames her argument in terms of a harsh, depersonalised world of intrinsically destabilising capitalism, versus an ethical, caring world of non-monetised family and community relations: 'When in the mid-nineteenth century, men were drawn into market life and women remained outside it,' she writes uncritically, 'female homemakers formed a moral brake on capitalism'. Care theorist Virginia Held (2005, p. 111) likewise directly associates for-profit enterprise with 'market values', which she sees as diametrically opposed to care.

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(Nussbaum, 1992; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). These contribute to the creation of the 'gut feelings' we have about what is right and wrong (Haidt, 2001; Gigerenzer, 2007). This essay seeks to recover and reclaim the old English word 'husbandry' to evoke and promote a masculine-associated ethic and practice of care. Grounded in agrarian and pastoral practice, husbandry, in the sense used here, means careful cultivation, tending and management. This rich iconic image of masculine-associated attentiveness in productive activities is in stark contrast to the stripped-down images of *Homo economicus* and the 'incentivised' CEO—images that have arisen, I argue, from a deleterious financialisation of masculinity.

Recovering the term 'husbandry' may seem odd, to the extent the word may be more commonly associated with men's historical legal and social domination of their female marital partners. This essay seeks to recover a different meaning of 'to husband', analogous to how gender theorists and activists re-appropriated the term 'queer,' converting it from a slur to a more positive usage.

Lest it be misunderstood, the argument here is *not* that there exists at some level of gender 'essences' a distinctly masculine style of care that we should label 'husbandry'. Rather, the first goal is to evoke and popularise a rich prototype of care that masculine-gendered people may find to be particularly consistent with their self-image. The second goal is to bolster the recognition of care as an indispensable element of economic activity.[2] The term 'husbandry' is especially useful for this purpose because of its historic link to activities that are easily recognisable as productive and 'economic'.

This essay lays out the need for the reclamation of husbandry and then demonstrates how it could change our thinking about environmentalism, carework and business. Possible drawbacks of this reclamation are discussed as well.

2. What we've learned from feminist scholarship on care

Care, when it is thought about at all within mainstream economics, tends to be both sentimentalised (that is, thought of as primarily a matter of altruistic emotion) and marginalised (that is, considered to belong to the sphere of non-economic—or at best quasi-economic—activity). For example, in one influential model of household behaviour, an actor is motivated—in the usual way posited by mainstream theory—by self-interest in the market, but then turns around and behaves as an altruist at home (Becker, 1981). Debates about CEO pay tend to focus on how to properly incentivise self-interested CEOs to act in the interest of their companies, through tailored high compensation schemes. Yet recently two articles have argued that the way to ensure that careworkers (such as nurses) act in the interest of the care recipients is to go *against* pecuniary self-interest and grant only low compensation (Heyes, 2005; Brekke and Nyborg, 2010). Low pay, they argue, ensures that only altruists will take caring jobs. Meanwhile, women's time spent caring for families has been excluded from discussions of work and production, and even now is not counted as part of GDP (Bjørnholt and McKay, 2014).

[2] Several movements now call for a 'caring economy'—for example, Caring Economics (http://www.caring-economics.org), the Caring Economy Campaign (http://caringeconomy.org) and the New Economy Coalition (http://neweconomy.net/new-economy-coalition). Although there are some differences in approach amongst these movements and the current article, in general this essay should be seen as complementary.

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A considerable body of feminist work over decades, across the social sciences and humanities (eg Tronto, 1993; Ruddick, 1989; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; England, 2005) as well as within economics (eg Folbre, 1995; Himmelweit, 1999; Folbre and Nelson, 2000; Meagher and Healy, 2003; Budlender, 2010) has challenged this simplification, sentimentalisation and neglect. For example, while there is a general sense that 'care activities' are of highest quality when accompanied by and motivated by authentic emotional commitments or 'caring feelings', it is also recognised that care work is *work*. Carework requires time and effort. Carework can therefore only be maintained when it is allocated serious economic resources of time and money (Nelson, 1999; Folbre and Nelson, 2006). It also often requires a high degree of knowledge and skill to be done well. *Competence* was identified early on by Joan Tronto (1993) as one of the essential elements of care, alongside attentiveness, responsibility and responsiveness.

While this is often forgotten, the work of care is also permeated by personal relations of power—for example, the power of a careworker over the vulnerable child or patient entrusted to their care, as well as the power of the person hiring or otherwise financially supporting the careworker over the worker. Carework is simultaneously, and even more importantly, structured by social and institutional relations of power. For example, the potential for women (as a group) to participate in the labour market on an equal basis as men is compromised when the family responsibilities of hands-on care are both radically individualised (rather than socially supported) and assigned to women (rather than also to men) (Folbre, 1994).

Hands-on, face-to-face carework is crucially important for the rest of the economy, providing the foundation for human survival and flourishing.[3] Liberal economic and political theory has tended to follow the advice of Thomas Hobbes, who wrote 'Let us consider men . . . as if but even now sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come into full maturity, without all kind of engagement to each other' (cited in Benhabib, 1987). This image of the self as radically autonomous has been called the 'separative' self (Keller, 1986; Nelson, 1992; England, 2003). Yet humans simply do not spring out of the Earth. Humans are born of women, nurtured and cared for as dependent children and socialised into family and community groups through carework.

At a more theoretical level, a serious challenge to gender stereotypes reveals that it is not the case that men are purely 'individual' (that is, separative) while women are purely 'relational' (or, as it has been called, soluble, with no identity apart from others). Nor are relations limited to possibilities defined by these poles (Nelson, 2005, 2010). Consider how classical liberal political and economic theory considers people to be equal, non-interdependent peers ('separative-separative'), erasing relations of dependence, inter-dependence and power. Relationships that are asymmetric in power, such as husband-wife (traditionally) or employer-worker, have tended to be understood as hierarchical in a dominating way ('separative-soluble'). When the wife is referred to as 'Mrs. John Jones' or the worker is seen as no more than a pair of hands directed by the boss, their identity and will are imagined to be subsumed by those of the dominator. Holistic alternatives ('soluble-soluble'), in imagining that people can simply merge

[3] The field of economics currently tends to be defined in terms of rational choice models, the study of markets or the use of particular tools of quantitative analysis. Defining economics as the study of ways in which societies organise themselves to provide for the survival and flourishing of life opens opportunities for more grounded and helpful analysis (Nelson, 1993A).

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together and act seamlessly as one unit, erase individuality. A serious consideration of care, however, reveals that we are all, every one of us, neither mythically separative nor mythically soluble but are *individuals-in-relation* (Nelson, 2010). We all require care at some points in our lives, and are also capable of choice and agency and of giving care.

This analysis raises a possibility of a form of relationship that is invisible from within a mind-set stuck in separative/soluble thinking: the possibility of asymmetric mutuality (Nelson, 2005, 2010). Some relations are hierarchical in terms of power, yet the person holding the power does not choose to use it to dominate, but instead respects and possibly even nurtures the weaker party. This has been an inadequately recognised insight of the care literature. The relationship between a caregiver and a living being in need of his or her care is *not* one of symmetry in power, nor is it one of melding together. Yet it does not have to be one of domination. The far-ranging implications of recognising this possibility within economics will be discussed later in this essay.

3. The need for a vivid image of husbandry

Feminist work has revealed that care is clearly both crucially important and deeply entwined with economics and politics.[4] Yet it is a basic fact of human psychology that people tend to pay the most attention, and feel the most affinity with, suggestions that are consistent with our pre-existing beliefs, sense of identity and values. To the extent that the feminist focus on care has so far privileged a feminine gender expression, it may awake a response (whether conscious or not) of 'not for me' or 'not my responsibility' amongst many men. In addition, to the extent that the feminist economics study of care has, to date, also been oriented towards traditionally feminine areas of childcare, health, education and the like, the crucial role of care in the traditionally masculine-encoded spheres of business and markets has been largely overlooked or even denied.

Given the serious problems in the world—including not only discrimination and deficits in health and education but also rising inequality, climate change, soul-deadening consumerism, war and the threat of war—neither assigning the work of care to only half the population nor narrowing it to particular spheres of life can be tolerated.

Arising in agrarian and pastoral societies, 'to husband' means, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2014), 'To till (the ground), to dress or tend (trees and plants), to manage as a husbandman; to cultivate'. The image evoked is of the yeoman farmer who carefully nurtured the growth of his crops, the biblical shepherds who watched over their sheep and the nomads who herd and tend their cattle in the Serengeti. Picture this husbandman calling his dog, his horses or his cattle by name. Picture him knowing intimately the challenges of drought and flood, the lore concerning breeding and protection and the shape of his landscape. Picture him as both working hard to bring forth the necessities of life for the family and community to which he belongs and doing this in a way that works alongside of and respects the natural forces at play and the non-human beings in his care.[5]

[4] Scholars of social policy and politics have been especially active in developing theories of care (e.g., Noddings, 2010; Engster, 2007; Tronto, 1993, 2013).

[5] This image of good husbandry is deliberately idealised, because it is aspirational. Note that idealisations of good (or good-enough) mothering likewise omit mention of abusive, neglectful, overwhelmed or otherwise severely deficient mothering.

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Unfortunately, a very different image and myth about the role of men in production gained ascendance in the West in the period following industrialisation. A dominant pattern emerged in which men left the home and farm to work in factories and commercial establishments, while women—when their families could afford it—remained in charge of child-rearing and household management. During the Victorian era, this led to an ideology of separate spheres, with commerce being envisioned as properly masculine and the place where norms of self-interest and competition should reign, and the home being conversely imagined as consistent with an essential feminine nature and ruled by norms of altruism and co-operation.

How odd, when you think about it, that human nature should be thought of as so wildly bifurcated. Do we really divide ourselves so sharply at the household front door?

This ideology was helped along by the profession of economics. The idea of the economy as a mechanical system driven by the 'energy' of self-interest and regulated by 'market logic' and the 'forces of competition' had been in ascendancy, starting with (a very limited reading of) Adam Smith, through Karl Marx and John Stuart Mill.[6] In the late 1800s, neoclassical economic theory took as its central image of production the activities of 'the firm,' envisioned as a unitary agent pursuing a single goal, that of maximising profit. Not only—as many commentators have pointed out—were the concerns of the earlier classical economists with wealth and distribution shoved aside, but the image of the producer as a responsible, careful husbandman was progressively erased as well. By ignoring the inter-dependence of producers with their economic, social and natural environments, the possibilities of care and abuse went unrecognised. Relations *within* firms were also modelled in ways that radically over-simplified them, draining them of the possibility of care. Rather than relations of independence and sociality amongst human beings, economists have assumed that intra-firm relations reflect, variously, a case of unitary decision making (soluble-soluble), a dominating hierarchy of boss versus worker (separative-soluble) or the existence of (impersonal) internal markets (separative-separative).

Recently there has been much discussion about the 'the financialisation of the economy' (Epstein, 2006; Denning, 2014). But notice how the transition from the image of the husbandman to the image of the robotic profit-maximiser, or equally robotic industrial worker, financialised *masculinity*. Rather than a man embedded in rich relationships with family, land, animals and purposive activity we now have a man whose main (or even exclusive) role in the family is to be the breadwinner, and whose role in the larger economy is envisioned as making money. While this left men as a group in a relatively more economically powerful position than women, as a group it also stripped them of their full humanity. 'Man the Cuthroat CEO' and 'Man the Paycheck' are limiting, stereotypical images, as damaging in their own way as 'Woman the Helper' and 'Woman the Dependent'.

Times have changed since agrarian and pastoral days, so the husbandman image needs some updating. Economies have shifted to include large industrial and service sectors and globalised corporations and markets. Family norms and social institutions that formerly gave the householder/husband power over the housewife have evolved as well. But what is important to recover from the contrast between husbandman and *Homo economicus* is the notion of care—in the sense of concern and in the sense of carefulness—as a core aspect of masculine-encoded identity and activity.

[6] For a discussion of the roots of this image in economists' 'physics envy,' see Nelson (1993B).

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4. Application: environmental stewardship

Do a Google search for 'husbandry,' and you will find it in active current use, mostly referring to careful stewardship of animals and/or agricultural crops and land. What could this mean for economics?

In fact, feminist theorising about care has been directly applied to the question of human-animal relationships recently, through the work of animal ethicist Raymond Anthony (2009, 2012) and his co-authors (Gjerris *et al.*, 2011). Anthony directly draws on sources including Martha Nussbaum's work on narrative ethics (Nussbaum, 1992), on pioneer works on the human-animal relation by the likes of Donna Haraway and Jane Goodall and on Sara Ruddick's and Joan Tronto's generative works on mothering and care to create an image of 'diligent husbandry' that can be drawn on to establish a better human-animal relationship (Anthony, 2009, p. 259, 274). Borrowing from the care literature, good husbandry is envisioned as characterised by respect, compassion, justice, attentiveness, responsibility, competence and responsiveness (Gjerris *et al.*, 2011). Anthony and his co-authors contrast this ethic of husbandry with an industrial ethic that in its most extreme form treats animals as no more than meat production machines.

One might also gain insight into and support for an ecological approach to economics by considering what the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (2015) lists as antonyms for 'to husband'. These include to 'blow, dissipate, fritter (away), lavish, misspend, run through, squander, throw away, waste'. There are good arguments to be made that the current generation on Earth (and especially the most wealthy amongst us) are currently doing just that with the endowment of natural resources and productivity we received from our ancestors. 'Economic man' dissipates. 'The good husbandman' does not.

To some, the recovery of diligent husbandry might not go far enough. Some may condemn any instrumental use of other sentient species, demanding absolute equality. Any notion that asymmetric mutuality between species could be possible may be dismissed as a demeaning paternalism, akin to defences of slavery or male dominion over women. Absolute equality amongst every sentient being, however, is only possible in some world other than this one. This world contains children and animals whose capacities are different from our own. Paternalism is not only *not* demeaning but it is actually unavoidable and—if accomplished with appropriate care and diligence—totally appropriate and healthy in the relationship of a *pater* to his child. The notion of good animal husbandry extends aspects of this image of respectful and even loving care to relations amongst species.

5. Application: carework

Another *Oxford English Dictionary* (2014) definition of 'husbandry' is 'the administration and management of a household; domestic Economy'. This definition is—not surprisingly—cross-referenced to a nearly identical one for 'housewifery.'[7] In pre-industrial times, keeping the household sustained and nourished was a whole-family project.

While some of that sense of a joint project was lost in the intervening centuries, in recent decades the meaning of fatherhood has been changing again. More women have

[7] Ironically, the OED goes on to say that a 'good husband' goes on to is one 'who manages his affairs with skill and thrift; a saving, frugal, or provident man; *an economist*' (emphasis added).

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entered the paid labor force. Old gender norms are eroding. Household technology has substituted for some forms of carework, while non-family sources of child care and health care have become more available. As a result, the Victorian era breadwinner/homemaker divide has become more blurred.

But it could change more. Much feminist writing has focussed on the need for men to take on their fair share of household responsibilities, if women are to achieve parity with men in paid employment and attain equivalent levels of economic security and power. This is a very good point. Yet concern for women's well-being need not be the only motivation for change. Any man who wants to be more than the narrow, financialised 'man the paycheck' should actively resist being denied the opportunity to exercise his capacity for masculine care in regards to spouse and children, pets and garden. Care can mean more than mowing the lawn; cooking does not require a pink apron; the challenge of changing a heavily soiled diaper/nappy or dealing with squabbling children should be seen as something that requires true 'manning up'.

In paid carework, as well, a 'both/and' understanding of human motivation opens new possibilities (Nelson, 1999). It means that providing quality care—for example, by enacting careful husbandry through employment in child care, health care, or education—should not be seen as inimical to earning a decent paycheck. Nor should the jobs be seen as effeminate.

Family carework is intertwined with environmental care in an interesting way in the work of environmental ethicist Hans Jonas. After extensive discussions of rational principles, Kant and so on in his *Imperative of Responsibility*, Jonas ultimately claims that the type of ethics that we need for environmental sustainability comes from quite a different source:

> All proofs of validity for moral prescriptions are ultimately reduced to obtaining evidence of an 'ontological' ought . . . When asked for a single instance . . . where the coincidence of 'is' and 'ought' occurs, we can point at the most familiar sight: the newborn, whose mere breathing uncontradictably addresses an ought to the world around, namely, to take care of him. Look and you know. (Jonas, 1984, pp. 130–31)

That is, 'the always acute, unequivocal, and choiceless responsibility which the newborn claims for himself' creates 'the ought-to-do of the subject who, in virtue of his power, is called to its care' (Jonas, 1984, p. 134, 93). Jonas seems quite unaware of the gender implications of his statements, presenting both parent and child as male. Yet in the process he clearly evokes an image of responsible husbandry, grounded in a visceral perception of the deep inter-dependence of life and the totally inegalitarian distribution—between caregiver and the newborn—of the power to act to support and sustain that life. Considering a particular infant, we see hands-on carework; considering generations into the future, environmental responsibility is powerfully evoked.

6. Application: business management

What about the conventionally 'economic' realm of business and commerce? An image of business and commerce that has been in ascendancy in recent decades is one of uncontrolled heartlessness, greed, and competition. In this, people are treated as no more than inter-changeable labour resources, and the natural environment as no more than a commodity ripe for exploitation. It is often assumed that businesses—right in line with neoclassical economic theories—are driven entirely by the goal of profit maximisation, enforced by competition and/or shareholder lawsuits. Businesses themselves

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are increasingly treated as commodities, bought and sold as profit-making centres with little regard to their unique products, histories, people or cultures. A progression towards such Wall Street capitalism is often treated as unstoppable—considered to be the inevitable result of some superhuman 'market logic'.

While the recent tendencies in this direction are clear, the process is *not* inherent in the nature of capitalism, and is not unstoppable. The notion of the profit-maximising firm (as well as notions about undifferentiated and infinitely substitutable workers and resources) was, in fact, invented by economists. By assuming very simple models and applying calculus (maximising) to an economy envisioned as machine-like, the academic field of economics very deliberately imitated the 'hard sciences'—at least in their 17th-century Newtonian form. It created distance for itself from the 'softer' social sciences and humanities (Nelson, 1993B). Unfortunately, actually looking at how real companies function was not part of this economics research agenda. And the further the influence of economists goes, the more life starts to imitate fiction (Nelson, 2015).

To see afresh how economies function, consider two additional images that take us beyond economy-as-machine: Main Street capitalism and The Cabal.

Discussions of Main Street versus Wall Street (or the City) arose during the 2008 financial crisis. The global financial system—dominated by relatively few large banks, investment firms, and insurance companies which employ a relatively small number of workers--melted down. While none of these financial institutions actually produce the goods and services that people need to live, their meltdown had wide-ranging disruptive effects on the often smaller and less concentrated Main Street businesses that produce them as well as provide livelihoods to many. Small businesses—epitomised in the small Main Street local grocer or barber—were particularly hard hurt in the credit crunch.

The Main Street image of business includes the possibility of husbandry-as-careful-management. Businesses are not, in fact, legally required to make every last possible dollar of profit, nor, for many of them, does market competition force this on them (Nelson, 2011; Bratton, 2011; Stout, 2012). Businesses that are 'husbanded' are enterprises or going concerns that are maintained for a variety of reasons, of which profit is only one. These may include the pride of creating an important, life-giving product; the creation of good jobs; the expression of creativity; contributing to the community; keeping up a family tradition; or the excitement of a good challenge. Corporate managers have a 'fiduciary duty' to manage in the interest of the corporation. While this is often (thanks to the economics profession!) now interpreted as 'must maximise profits for the shareholders,' it actually means far more. It means that the leaders are entrusted with the management of the company, for the good of all the company, on both financial and non-financial matters (Stout, 2012). The good husbandman, whether executive or worker, tends and cultivates. The good husbandman does a good, responsible day's work for a good day's pay.

Wall Street capitalism is far from being the outcome of some neutral, superhuman market logic and inexorable force of competition. A far more accurate picture is to see is at created by The Cabal of powerful elites, who want to maintain and extend their power. The concentration of financial markets (and other important markets, such as agricultural marketing and parts of high tech), and the fact that boards of many companies draw from the same small group of the wealthy and powerful, means that appeals to the law of the market and the discipline of competition are often only

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smokescreens. The scenarios is often one of too much cozy *co-operation* (amongst the elite), rather than of impersonal, fierce competition.[8]

Appeals to 'market logic' are often simply excuses for neglecting the responsibilities of husbandry. Wages are going below subsistence? 'The market made me do it'. Oil got dumped in the bay? 'From a bottom-line point of view, paying legal settlements is cheaper than investing in prevention'. CEO salaries are outrageous? 'That's the market price for talent'. Stock options are giving the leaders millions? 'Self-interested agents will only do good work if they are properly incentivised at all times'. Defenders of the bottom-line-only point of view argue that it is too confusing to give CEOs multiple objectives (Fama and Jensen, 1983; Jensen, 2002). Tough luck: the world is not a high school math problem with a single right answer at the bottom of the page.

This financialisation of the CEO role is unfortunate, and not only because it has contributed to dramatically widening inequalities in wealth and income. The simplistic 'man the cutthroat CEO' has been stripped of his full humanity. What should be a full human role of diligent husbandry has become a precarious, external reward–dependent pathological race to status (Knights and Tullberg, 2012). A worker, as well, viewed as 'man the paycheck,' is encouraged to shed all dimensions of responsibility for the quality of his work, loyalty to his employer, and concern for his co-workers.

Only relatively recently have scholars begun to bring together care theory and business (eg Hamington and Sander-Staudt, 2011). Only relatively recently have economists begun to look at the non-pecuniary emotional and social dimensions of employment (eg Akerlof, 1982; Fehr and Falk, 2002).

7. Caveats and warnings

Could the reclamation of husbandry as a positive, masculine image of care wind up badly? Certainly. At least four problems can be easily predicted: manipulation, domination, marginalisation and essentialisation.

7.1 Manipulation

When thinking of civilian homes and businesses, it is women who are stereotyped as more altruistic than men; when talk turns to the military, the case reverses. Men are often portrayed as willing to altruistically sacrifice their lives for high ideals, such as the good of the country, in time of war. Women's altruism towards (only) their own families may then be regarded as more selfish and less noble by comparison.

There are many problems with this image of soldiering. One is the identification of care with sacrifice. The feminist literature has spilled a good deal of ink discussing the pathologies of the co-dependent, doormat caregiver who does not count her own well-being as being amongst her responsibilities. Instead of contrasting selfish, separative self-interest and sacrificing, soluble altruism, a more realistic view of human nature considers more options. Howard Margolis (1982) suggested a model of human behaviour as 'neither selfish nor exploited'—that is, we have a tendency to watch out for the welfare of others, as long as we do not feel that we are the only ones doing do.

[8] Unfortunately, many critics of neoliberal policies have themselves been taken in by the neoliberal image of the market as an impersonal machine. As a result, much academic ink has been spilled decrying 'inherent market logic' that might have been better used supporting husbandry and Main Street.

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Another problem is the idea that soldiers are motivated primarily by lofty principles. In actuality, one of the strongest motivations—and sometimes the only one—for keeping soldiers fighting is their care for each other (Wong *et al.*, 2003). This bonding amongst war buddies, as well as the care and trust that can develop between soldiers and their commanders, is commendable. It is also highly exploitable and manipulable. Nancy Folbre (2001) has discussed how caring relations between vulnerable people and their caregivers can make the caregivers 'prisoners of love'—unwilling to, say, go on strike for living wages because it would leave their charges in the lurch. Similarly, soldiers who have long since stopped believing that higher principles are behind a particular war may yet be manipulated into continuing to fight to protect their buddies. A similar dynamic, though less intense, may also go on at civilian workplaces.

What this means is that the attitudes of husbandry and care, to work well, must permeate *all* levels of management and government. Opportunistic leaders manipulating their minions into providing care will eventually lead to bitterness, and to the 'tapping out' of care as people realise that they have been exploited.

7.2 Domination

Could asymmetric mutuality go wrong? Certainly.

This article argues that unequal, but respectful and caring, relations to children, animals and others (such as the frail elderly) who differ in levels of capability vis-à-vis functioning prime-age adult humans are not only possible but may be manifestly and uniquely appropriate. The good husbandman is in a position of greater power than those he cares for, and uses this power for good.

Of course, once one allows this possibility, those who want more power will try to classify more groups as belonging in the dependent and less capable category. Historically, all women and all groups classified as slaves or primitives (eg 'the white man's burden') were put under condescending, paternalistic 'care'—losing rights to autonomy and self-definition in the process.

What this means is that appealing to 'husbandry' is far from a cure-all. Its appropriateness for any particular case must be carefully explored and critiqued.

7.3 Marginalisation

If husbandry becomes mainstream, does that mean that women and women's contributions will again be marginalised? Will care become the *male* norm, with women again ignored? Will men be perceived as 'thinking of it first' and 'doing it better'?

Unfortunately, there is already evidence of tendencies in this direction. For example, Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden (2008) rediscovered the importance of social bonds in markets. Only minimally citing the decades of feminist work on care, they label their newfound phenomenon as 'fraternity'. Henk Jochemsen (2013) explores principles of care in animal husbandry, describing at length Joan Tronto's (1993) pathbreaking four-category description of the dimensions of care. As its source, he cites Raymond Anthony (2012), not Tronto.

Feminists in particular should be leery of misuses of the idea of husbandry that may work against the hard-earned, long-deserved recognition of women, of women's traditional activities and of women's advances in theorising care. Yet I believe feminists should, on the whole, welcome husbandry. We should recognise that it doesn't have to be a zero-sum game—we shouldn't feel we have to choose between valuing women and valuing men. Husbandry is

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also an image that moves us from ideas of men 'helping' with care to men actually being responsible for care. Such a paradigm change would get us a long way towards better families, better businesses and a better relation with the rest of the natural world.

The effect of sexist biases in academic research and citation practices is not likely to go away, though it could be guarded against with more attention. Whether the benefit of reclaiming husbandry will ultimately outweigh the cost of possible marginalisation of the feminist work on care can only be determined with the passage of time and by the amount of energy put into keeping the theory on track.

7.4 Essentialisation

When I first came to feminism in the 1970s, many feminists thought that we would eventually transcend any talk of 'masculine' or 'feminine' and recognise people and traits in entirely non-gender-differentiated ways. Instead of ideas of men and women as different, androgyny would reign. Any talk of a 'masculine' image of husbandry may, therefore, be misunderstood by those with a bent towards the androgyny as a naïve surrender to outdated gender beliefs. The charge of gender essentialism—that is, of assuming that there exist opposing masculine and feminine natures that create categorically different behaviours, occupations and so on for men and women—may therefore be (wrongly) launched against this essay.

Alternatively, the idea of husbandry may also be rejected by those who hold strongly gender-essentialist beliefs. Some may prefer to continue to believe that caring is compatible only with a presumably relational and emotional feminine nature, as opposed to a more autonomous and rational masculine nature. In my view, this support of what Julia Serano calls 'oppositional sexism' ('the belief that female and male are rigid, mutually exclusive categories, each possessing a unique and nonoverlapping set of attributes, abilities, and desires' [2007, p. 13]) is damaging. Such theories exaggerate differences between men and women and between the economy and care.

The idea of husbandry might also be found appealing for the wrong reasons. Some may want to gender-essentialise husbandry. A literature could grow up claiming that women by nature have one 'style' of care, while husbandry refers to men's 'style'. This would start with some observations of differences, *on average*, in male and female time use or perceived modes of engagement with children, which may arise from some differences in the underlying (overlapping) distributions of inclinations across men and women, and/or the strong influence of cultural conditions. It would then likely proceed—based on prior beliefs, apparent plausibility and cherry-picked and misinterpreted data—to claim that evolutionary theory and neuroscience 'show' that (all) men are made to do husbandry while (all) women are essentially mothering. Likely as not the claim would be made that husbandry is compatible with business management and mowing the lawn, but not child care or elder care, and vice versa for mothering. This would be unfortunate and should be resisted.[9]

This essay advocates neither an androgynous nor an essentialist position, because both these positions ignore two important facts:

- First, the idea of a strict, uni-dimensional masculine/feminine gender binary is a phenomenon of our minds. It is an extremely strong and widespread cognitive

[9] Some good resources for this battle include Fine (2010) and Rippon *et al.* (2014).

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schema. We use it, in deep and systematic ways, to organise our conceptual and social worlds and often our self-identities (Prentice and Miller, 2006; Serano, 2007). Strict androgynists will be challenged by the fact that it is therefore unlikely to go away simply because we might wish it to. Gender essentialists, on the other hand, will be challenged by recent work on varieties of gender (e.g., including queer, trans, cis, and so on), and the apparent independence of different dimensions of gender identity and behavior from each other (Carothers and Reis, 2013; Serano, 2007).

- Second, 'absolutely the same' (androgyny) and 'totally distinct' (gender essentialism) are not the only alternatives. People do hold strong *stereotypes* about gender differences. In the realm of actual identity and behaviour, however, small to modest differences, detectable only on average, along with a great degree of gender similarity and large ranges of overlap between men and women are more the norm (Hyde, 2005; Nelson, 2014).

The purpose of reclaiming a particularly masculine image of care is not to assert that men care substantially differently but to create in our minds and hearts a powerful image with which masculine-gendered people can identify and which can be used to oppose the financialisation of masculinity and the economy.

Can a woman 'husband'? The testimony of female farmer and ranchers, at the least, would answer 'yes', though this may or may not be the most appealing image to many women.[10] Because this is not an argument about essences or styles of care, it does not imply that women are, as a group, at any disadvantage compared to men, as a group, when it comes to carefully 'husbanding' a major business or other powerful organisation.

8. Conclusion

To the extent that the care literature in economics has focussed on women, it may seem to imply that a man would need to become a 'male mother' to fully participate—much as women have often had to earn the status of 'honorary male' before they are allowed to exercise economic or political power. To the extent that the care literature has so far concentrated on areas such as childcare, health, and education, it may also imply that care is not present in and not necessary for human activity in the more traditionally masculine spheres of markets and business. This article challenges these views.

Caring is a human trait, and care is a human responsibility, in all areas of life in which we find ourselves. Men who neglect their capability to care are less fully men. An economy that neglects care advances towards only greed, robotic work and ecological destruction.

The place of care in the economy is everywhere.

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[10] The gender with which one identifies and the gender one expresses (in appearance and behavior) may be different, as Serrano (2007, p. 98) has pointed out. Thus, some who identify as women may feel aligned with an image of husbandry, while some who identify as men may feel a closer affinity with mothering. The point of the current article may then be stated more precisely as reclaiming an image that may appeal, not to men or males *per se* but to those who express masculine gender.

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