Arguing for a universal caregiver model of welfare provision and assessing alternative incarnations

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A feminist approach to political philosophy and policy-making, as I understand it and endorse it, is one that aims to spell out a theory of justice that is not built on the consideration of male experiences and life patterns alone (defining work as paid work, social contribution as contribution through paid work, workers as free from caring responsibilities, etc.) and that is attentive to (and adequately deals with) the special obstacles women face in trying to pursue a life plan of their own making. In many countries (not exclusively northern Atlantic ones), women have now won equal legal rights to further their education, hold property and participate in the realms of politics and paid work. This does not mean, as has been repeatedly noted by feminist scholars, that they now have the same opportunity men have to make effective use of these rights. The reasons are manifold and relate, for the most part, to the history of women’s subordination and the multiple shadows it still projects, and in particular, to the long shadows of the separate spheres model of family and social organization. The gendered division of labour (henceforth GDL) assigning different spheres of activity to men and women has thus come to be considered by many feminists as a (if not the) central source of women’s continuing inequality in the present world (Okin 1989, Bubeck 1995a, Fraser 1998).

However, a wholehearted debate continues to take place amongst feminists as to how best to redress the continuing adverse effects of the separate spheres model on women’s status and life chances. Some feminists claim women should become more like men are now, that we should help women into men’s side of the divide and pass on women’s side to the state and/or the market. For these theorists the path to women’s liberation is engagement in full-time paid work, and a pre-requisite for this is seen in the state and/or the market taking over the huge care work load traditionally done by women unpaid in their homes. They support what Nancy Fraser (1996) has termed the “universal breadwinner model” of welfare provision, endorsing a maximal externalization of caregiving as the sole workable path to women’s equality with men. Other theorists object the androcentrism of this model and its implicit devaluation of

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2 I borrow this suggestive image from Diemut Bubeck 1995b.
3 An ideal-typical example of this position can be found in the work of American economist Barbara Bergmann, who argues straightforwardly that only by single-minded devotion to the public sphere will women attain equality with men, and does not hesitate to advocate a maximal commodification of care work as a necessary means to this end. See, for example, Bergmann 1998.
women’s traditional role. They stress the intrinsic value of “women’s work” and the limits to the commodification of care (both in terms of its desirability for caregivers and care recipients alike, and of its practical possibility) and warn that under this scheme women are likely to remain in charge of a non negligible residuum of care work, which would burden them with an excessive work load (the double shift) and perpetuate their disadvantage with respect to men in the labour market and the political arena, as in respect of leisure time. They find the problem to be not women’s doing this care work but their doing it in an unpaid misrecognized manner. They consequently demand state support for women’s traditional role and public recognition of its value, aiming at what Fraser defines as a “caregiver parity model”\(^4\). Finally, a third group finds both of the above mentioned to be false solutions, claiming that only role-sharing –the abolition of the gendered division of labour– can eventually bring about gender justice and –some further add– a more balanced and satisfying life for both men and women (Okin 1989, Nussbaum 2000, Coltrane 1996, Kimmel 2000, Brighouse-Wright 2007). This group, also counting Fraser (1996, 1998) within its ranks, advocates what she calls the “universal caregiver model” of welfare provision. They claim that the second model sketched above is also defective, as it is bound, despite its efforts to the contrary, to perpetuate the misrecognition of the caregiver role, in maintaining its association with women and with lower levels of income and political influence.

It is the third welfare model which will be the focus of this paper, and it is, to my view, the most desirable of the three, for reasons including but exceeding justice for women. The paper is in two parts. Part one will analyze the moral reasons for endorsing the third welfare model sketched above. It will attempt to justify a certain version of the universal caregiver model as a general outlook of a (gender) just welfare regime, consistent with the liberal concern that wide opportunities are secured for people to pursue happiness as they may conceive it, provided they do not inflict undue harm on others, and consistent with similar opportunities being secured to others\(^5\). The second part will deal with more concrete issues of policy design, exploring two policy packages that emerge as promising candidates to flesh out the universal caregiver model.

Part 1: Arguing for the universal caregiver model of welfare provision: the abolishment of the gendered division of labour as a goal and a new image of the ideal citizen

The universal caregiver model of welfare provision, as sketched by Fraser (1996, 1998), springs from the insight that gender justice will not be attained unless the GDL is abolished. Fraser’s analysis of the weaknesses of Universal Breadwinner and Caregiver

\(^{4}\) German philosopher Angelika Krebs could be associated to this position. She claims that women’s domestic care work –or love work, as she calls it– is true economic work (i.e. work that is useful to others and that partakes in the exchange of tasks and services in society) and that women doing it are disadvantaged because this is not acknowledged and their work remains unpaid and misrecognized. While she recommends some of this work (what she refers to as partner work) to be shared rather than compensated, she advocates a wage for love work as a way of financially compensating and granting adequate recognition to those who care for dependent people (i.e. for people who, unlike a healthy able-bodied partner, could not take care of themselves, such as children, the handicapped and the elderly). See, Krebs 1998.

\(^{5}\) Some of these arguments are probably not liberal, however, in the sense of not requiring as a foundation any appeal to a particular conception of the good life. As I will argue, one of the reasons why I think the GDL is an undesirable social arrangement is that it forecloses opportunities that are crucial for human flourishing (at least for most people). But even here my argument remains liberal in the first sense, since I only argue these crucial opportunities should be there for everyone (inasmuch as this is possible) without this meaning that people should be obliged to make use of them.
Parity leads her to the conclusion that they fall short of providing justice for women for “in neither case does the remedy transform the underlying structure that generates the injustice. Neither transforms the gender differentiation of breadwinning and caregiving” (1998: 62).

On what grounds the gendered division of labour can be claimed to be unjust will be the first thing I would like to elucidate in this section. But rather than sketching a distinctly feminist case against the GDL, I would like to map a number of different (though probably complementary) paths to the questioning of the GDL that seem compatible with the liberal concern discussed above. Next, I will briefly address the issue of what this entails at the level of institutional organization and state action, i.e. what sort of institutional changes and state actions can be thought to be both permissible and efficient in trying to remedy this injustice. But before we begin, a terminological clarification is in order.

By GDL I mean the institutionalized prescription of a specialization in paid “productive” work for men and unpaid “reproductive” work for women, urged by ubiquitous ideals of femininity and masculinity and enforced by a host of social norms and institutions, which are either allowed to operate or conferred direct backing by the legal system. The abolition of the GDL should not be confused with the equal sharing between men and women of both types of work. The abolition of the GDL entails that women and men would not be pressed into different roles by social norms and institutions. It would presumably lead to a much larger amount of sharing couples but it would not necessarily entail that all couples would share, or share equally (owing to individual choices and preferences), or even that men and women would do on average the same amount of each kind of work (on account of the possibility of biologically based differences in prevalent preferences regarding childrearing in men and women).

Why, then, can the GDL be said to be unjust and, more generally, undesirable? Any balanced case against the GDL should draw on an accurate characterization of care work which does justice to its complex nature.

Care work is not just something women have to be unburdened from in order to be able to devote themselves to truly valuable ends in the public sphere, neither is sole responsibility for caregiving a likely path to a flourishing life (not, in any case, for most people, and certainly not in a society that devalues care work and renders caregivers economically and socially vulnerable). For care work is, indeed, a valuable option for individuals: work that can be pleasurable and that makes a distinct contribution to people’s ability to flourish and work that is often done not just out of love or pleasure but out of a sense of moral obligation and commitment that is essential to intimate relations. But, secondly, care work is, unlike a hobby, necessary, useful work that is

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6 Harry Brighouse and Adam Swift provide a detailed analysis of the ways in which the peculiar fiduciary character of parental relationships opens the possibility for parents to develop and exercise capacities that they could not develop or exercise through engagement in other types of relationships and which make, for many, a unique and irreplaceable contribution to their flourishing. The contribution of parental relationships to human flourishing is in this sense, according to the authors, like that of a romantic sexual relationship, “many, if not most, people are such that they could not flourish fully without it: it contributes something to their flourishing that nothing else could contribute” (2006: 99). Brighouse and Swift use this account of the importance of parenting relationships for human flourishing to ground their claim for a fundamental right of parents to raise their children.

7 John Baker (2008: 5) reviews a recent empirical study based on conversations with caregivers and care recipients in Ireland: “over and over again, the reasons caregivers gave for making care choices, often at substantial material cost to themselves, related to love, moral obligation and the patent absence of alternatives that could meet the needs of their children, dependent spouses or parents. While carers wanted more recognition and material support for their care work, they also felt that its love labouring aspects were inalienable; they needed time to be present to intimate others and to have the energy to
beneficial both to care recipients and to society at large (and that is frequently legally required from caregivers, even if their motives are often deeper). Finally, care work is also hard, time-consuming work that often goes round the clock and involves a significant amount of dull, repetitive work (sometimes with very limited chances for enjoyment, as when caring for a seriously ill or disabled person), that can pose serious opportunity costs on caregivers (in terms of their ability to engage in other meaningful activities and relationships) and can thus seriously affect their ability for personal fulfillment.

What are we to learn from this picture? The first point reminds us that for many people, being able to care for those they are intimately related to makes a positive and irreplaceable contribution to their prospects for leading a fully flourishing life. It suggests we should aim to enable everyone to take part in care work if we want to enlarge the prospects for human flourishing. The second point gives an additional reason why we as a society should support people in their caregiver role: that the work they do, far from benefiting only themselves, is indeed beneficial to society at large. Finally, the third point warns about the dangers of overloading people with caring responsibilities: too much care work can be crippling and seriously affect people’s ability to lead a flourishing life.

Both the first and the third of these points combine to cast serious doubts about the desirability of an institution, such as the GDL, that favours a highly unequal distribution of care work: too much on one side, too little on the other. But four additional sets of reasons can be put forward against the GDL.

The GDL is undesirable, in the first place, for it unnecessarily restricts women’s and men’s ability to contribute to society through the (combination of) activities they are best at and/or they find more enjoyable, meaningful and fulfilling (their freedom of occupation). And it is all the more undesirable, the more we think participation in both spheres may be (be it standardly) required for human flourishing. The GDL would be undesirable for this reason even if the different tasks it ascribed to men and women weren’t differently valued and rewarded (that is, even if they didn’t lead to one group gaining advantage over the other, and to the constitution of the latter as second-class).

However, it can further be argued, and this is the second set of reasons, that the GDL does work to the disadvantage of women rather than men, even if it also curtails men’s ability to develop certain traits of character or engage in some meaningful engage in the nurturing forms of care. Because this part of care work is based on norms of mutuality, commitment and presence that define intimacy, they believed paid forms of care could complement it but not replace it (…) In a society in which these beliefs are widely held, an attempt to address the gendered division of labour by externalizing and commodifying care while pushing carers into paid employment runs against its members deeply ingrained understandings of human relationships and frustrates their needs for love and care.”

That care work is beneficial to society at large -and not only to care recipients- is especially clear in the case of children. Well raised children will normally grow up to become healthy and active members of society, productive workers and tax-paying citizens, the kind of people others will want to have there as partners, friends, neighbours or fellow citizens. Nancy Folbre (1994) has argued that well raised and nurtured children can be regarded as public goods in the standard economic sense, i.e. as goods that are such that it is impossible to restrict their consumption only to those who contribute to the costs of production. Thus, even those members of society who do not contribute to the work of raising well nurtured children, will equally reap the benefits.

This is the case most notably with respect to children, since parents are usually granted not only the legal right but also the legal responsibility to care for their children. Hence, argues Anne Alstot (2004), their engaging in care work is not just a choice they make but one that is mandated by the state -and rightly so, for continuity of care is vital for children’s well-being. But this, in turn, means that the state cannot walk away from its own responsibility to support parents, over whom it has set a heavy burden they may not be able to bear alone.
experiences and relationships. Feminist scholars have developed different versions of this argument, but we could summarize the core ideas as follows. In instituting unpaid misrecognized care work as “women’s work”, the GDL works to construct women as an economically vulnerable, low status group of second-class citizens. A number of causal mechanisms interact to generate a system of relatively coherent social reproduction of gender inequality, with inequalities in the private sphere (notably those issuing from the gendered allocation of care responsibilities) reinforcing those in the public sphere and vice versa, with the absence of supportive social arrangements (such as family friendly policies and proper childcare facilities) setting high costs for individual defections from the cycle\(^{10}\). The result is a series of detrimental effects on women’s life prospects in fundamental areas, which are unlikely to be effectively redressed, as Fraser’s analysis strongly suggests, unless their ultimate source is challenged (Fraser 1998). Effects comprise, most notably, life-long economic insecurity (women being especially vulnerable to material deprivation -the feminization of poverty- and to economic dependency subjecting them to domination\(^{11}\) and making them easy victims of abuse), but also reduced opportunities to achieve social esteem (whether as mothers and wives, through the devaluation of women’s work, or as participants in the public sphere, where they face especial obstacles, including gender bias in evaluation of performance and statistical discrimination). Both women’s economic insecurity and lesser opportunities to achieve social esteem contribute to the general devaluation of women as a group that is a fertile ground for gender violence to flourish\(^{12}\).

A third set of reasons issues from a concern for the wellbeing of children, who represent one of the main fractions among those in need of care. By discouraging fatherly involvement in the daily care of their daughters and sons, the GDL acts against the interests of children of both sexes, who in various ways would be better off with the higher probability of enjoying two primary caregivers that would obtain in the absence of a GDL. Shared responsibility for continued care would benefit children by spreading risks in a matter that is central for their present and future wellbeing, as continuity of care is assured in case one of the carers dies or gets severely ill or disabled. It would further benefit them in allowing them to profit from both parents’ strengths as carers due to differences in character, skills, interests, etc. Active participation of fathers in daily care has also been shown to help children develop less stereotyped images of men and women and hence of the possibilities open to them in the future (Coltrane 1998:128). It is especially positive for girls, who also show higher levels of self-esteem when they live in non traditional households, as do their mothers. Furthermore, if, as suggested by the first set of reasons, the abolishment of the GDL effectively increased people’s ability to lead more fulfilling lives, it would also lead to children enjoying better care, as provided by happier parents, who live more balanced and satisfying lives. Finally, if, as suggested by the second set of arguments, the GDL damages women’s social standing and fosters domestic violence, its abolishment would save many

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\(^{10}\) See Brighouse-Wright 2007, for a neat overview of the relevant mechanisms.

\(^{11}\) In the sense of subjection to the arbitrary will of another person. See Pettit (1997) for this definition of domination and for an analysis of its detrimental consequences for the person subject to domination that is highly relevant to the situation of women.

\(^{12}\) American sociologist Scott Coltrane has carried out a wide-ranging cross-cultural analysis on the relationship between the GDL and the incidence of gender violence in a sample of over 100 societies. After controlling for all the commonly hypothesized determinants of gender violence, he concludes that the allocation of caring responsibilities by sex contributes causally to increase the societal level of violence against women relative to the level that would obtain in the absence of gendered specialization (Coltrane 1988).
children from being forced from an early age to witness and experience the horrors of domestic violence, and hence to be prone to reproduce it in their adulthood.

Partly related to the GDL’s effect on the education of children is a fourth set of arguments appealing to the stake a democratic state has in enabling and promoting civic virtue. If it is to be stable, a just state has to ensure children are raised to become citizens with a sense of justice, able to assess what justice entails and willing to act accordingly. But, as argued by Susan Okin (1989: 17), they are unlikely to be so raised “unless the first and most formative example of adult interaction usually experienced by children is one of justice and reciprocity” and the latter will tend not to have such character (if the arguments in the second set are correct) unless the GDL is abolished. A related argument, also by Okin (1989: 18), states that “the sharing of roles between men and women (...) would have a further positive impact because the experience of being a physical and psychological nurturer (...) would increase that capability to identify with and fully comprehend the viewpoints of others that is important to a sense of justice. In a society that minimized gender, this would be more likely to be the experience of all of us”. Yet another argument is to be made relating to the promotion of civic virtue: if it is to effectively challenge the structures perpetuating undue privilege, a just state must rely heavily on the mobilized support of those who would gain from its dismantlement, and should strive, at the very least, to enable such virtuous political participation. For women who have to bear sole responsibility for the daily care, and frequently also (shared or sole) responsibility for the economical support of dependents, political participation is often a luxury they cannot afford. And let us recall that women are not only half the population, but also the majority among the poor. Jane Lewis and Susanna Giullari mention this as an advantage of role-sharing, and report that “in the Scandinavian countries, where policies to reconcile work and family (...) have developed furthest, women’s participation in local and central government is also highest” (2005: 95)

What, then, does this entail at the level of institutional organization and state action? What sort of institutional changes and state actions can be thought to be permissible in trying to remedy this injustice? To begin with, the state can certainly help promoting the GDL itself, through welfare provisions that construct men as full-time breadwinners and women as housewives (as the Caregiver Parity model would do), or that construct social contribution as contribution through paid work, thus devaluing women’s work and contributing to its continued ascription to women under the form of a second shift (as the Universal Breadwinner model would do). But even if we agree on this, why privilege role-sharing, in the way a Universal Caregiver model seems to do? Would it be permissible, from a liberal standpoint, to favour living arrangements based on role-sharing rather than trying to accommodate the different living arrangements families may choose, without favouring either traditional or egalitarian arrangements? I am willing to admit there is something to this worry but the answer is still “yes, it is not only permissible but even required”. For there is a tension here between people’s interest in retaining a significant freedom of association and freedom from excessive state surveillance, and their interest to have their other liberties and opportunities duly protected by the state (especially those that are crucial to the flourishing of so many). So the sort of arrangements that I would favour would be such that would enable and even promote role-sharing (because of its beneficial effects mentioned above and as required to approach a fairer distribution of life chances) but that would not rule out other family arrangements, in accordance with the conviction that it is up to each person to decide over her own way to seek happiness.
Hence, our analysis of the consequences of the GDL enables us to support a certain version of the Universal Caregiver model of welfare provision, built around the image of an ideal citizen that is likely to be both a breadwinner and a primary caregiver, but the above discussion sounds a note of caution. As we go through the details in trying to flesh out a Universal Caregiver model of welfare provision, as we will in the following section, we should keep in mind that we may not go as far as to enforce role-sharing, and we should be particularly cautious not to set the institutional framework so as to render women and children in traditional or quasi-traditional households seriously vulnerable, as present arrangements tend to make them, to deprivation and abuse.

Part 2: fleshing out the universal caregiver model: the Gornick-Meyers proposal and a universal basic income

Janet Gornick and Marcia Meyers (2003) have recently put forward a detailed policy proposal for reconciling parenthood and employment that has rightfully drawn considerable attention (see Wright, forthcoming, for a series of appraisals by leading scholars). The proposed policy package is intended to ease the way to a dual-earner/dual carer society (much akin to Fraser’s universal caregiver model), as “an end vision that honors the importance of both earning and caring, both child well-being and gender equality” (Gornick-Meyers 2003: 4). To help attain a dual-earner/dual carer society, the authors propose a combination of family leaves of different kinds, and working time regulations (on account of the fact that workers are likely to have caring responsibilities), and enlarged possibilities for the externalization of child-care (including child-care, earlier schooling, and longer school hours) on account of the fact that parents are likely to hold jobs. The general idea is to reconcile parenthood and employment by redefining the demands we as a society set on parents and workers so that meeting them simultaneously becomes a true possibility. The package is intended to enable and mildly promote role-sharing without imposing it, and is thus much akin to our aim as defined above.

But the proposal is also admittedly incomplete as a welfare model: it aims to delineate the sort of policies that would enable couples with children to combine earning and caring without undue strain, but some of the opportunities it would create would not be really seizable for low-earning couples (who could not dispense with any extra income they could get through working longer hours) or for single parents, most of them mothers (whose needs are more acute both on the earning and the caring front, since they are often not only sole carers but sole providers for their children). They note that additional support would be due for these groups, possibly in the form of measures to raise wages, universal child allowances or targeted help. Yet another group the proposal does not address is that of women in traditional or quasi-traditional households, who bear sole responsibility for caregiving and have little if any attachment to the labour market. These women are doing useful work and are rendered by present arrangements economically dependent on their spouses and hence especially vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. They, too, and their children, deserve additional support. The injustice of their situation is one of the reasons why we should care to head away from the GDL towards a dual earner/dual carer society, so we should beware of leaving them behind as we strive to move forward.

A universal basic income, here understood as an unconditional income paid by the government on a regular basis to every member of the political community from the

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13 The analysis of an unconditional basic income in this section draws extensively on Elgarte (2008) but several points have been re-elaborated or spelled out in further detail.
cradle to the grave and compatible with earned income from other sources, has been advocated, among other things, as a policy that could advance gender justice precisely because of its ability to protect women from the distinct economic risks they face due to the GDL (Alstott 2001, Parker 1993). As has been noted, full or partial specialization in unpaid care work renders women economically dependent of their partners and at serious financial risk in the (very likely) event of divorce, for no or weak labour market attachment leads to lower earning potential while main responsibility for childcare after divorce amounts to greater financial needs and less time available for paid work. The consequences of women’s more disrupted work-life extend far beyond child-rearing years into old age, for low and/or intermittent earnings lead to meager or no pension and social security entitlements. By decoupling benefit entitlement from paid work, a basic income is effectively able to provide life-long income security both to homemakers and part-time or intermittent workers, thus meeting women’s distinctive needs regarding income security.

Additionally, a livable basic income would substantially improve most women’s fallback option from any relationship (in giving them a modest but sufficient income they can count on no matter what). This enhanced fallback option due to economic independence would benefit women: I) by increasing their ability to exit (or not to enter) undesirable relationships of any sort, thus significantly protecting them from domination and its damaging effects and II) by consequently enhancing their voice within relationships (and hence the power to shape them so as to make them more satisfactory).

However, if full justice for women entails the abolishment of the GDL, the question arises whether a basic income could not only counter the effects of the GDL on women’s income security and bargaining power but also play a supportive role in the transition towards a society where the GDL could be abolished and full justice for women attained.

As we move from one form of social organization to another (from a society molded by the GDL to one in which such division is no longer socially enforced and has come to lose its current ascendancy on people’s lives) what we need is an income security policy that can be supportive to those at the vanguard while also protecting those who lag behind and enabling them to move forward.

In making role sharing economically viable for everyone while keeping everyone safe from poverty and economic dependency, a basic income scheme would indeed be up to this challenge: it would protect homemakers without trapping them in the household and provide economic security to double shifters, while also enabling all couples to share paid and unpaid work in allowing them to both work for pay less than full-time or to temporarily interrupt labour market participation in order to free time for care work without thereby causing household income to fall below a decent minimum.

It has been warned, though, that, given current gendered norms and expectations, men might not be willing in significant numbers to seize this opportunity to reduce or interrupt their labour market participation in order to take up a considerable amount of unpaid work at home, and that the introduction of a basic income might contribute to reinforcing the gendered division of labour if more women than men get to use this opportunity to reduce their labour market attachment (Robeyns 2000, 2001). Given the consequences of the GDL on women’s status and on the incidence of gender violence, this cannot simply be welcomed as the result of women’s choice.

However, the undesired effects stem, in this case, from the joint impact of multiple causes. Basic income is just one of them, and not necessarily the one we should want to act on to prevent the effect from happening. As I have argued, basic income
does quite a good job as an income security policy for the transition towards a gender just society. Moreover, what makes it possible for basic income to lead to a reinforcement of the GDL is the fact that it allows women to withdraw from the labour market without fear of destitution or economic dependency. But this is a necessary consequence of its fulfilling its duty to protect homemakers. It is hard to think how a policy that fulfilled this duty could by itself preclude the possibility of a reinforcement of the gendered division of labour. Now, given that these adverse effects are in part due to policies in other fields which are themselves defective, it is by promoting changes in these other fields that they are to be overcome. Media regulations, educational and labour market policies, all could be used to promote role sharing under a basic income scheme, and all would arguably need to be reshaped anyway if we are to move towards a gender-just society.

I shall then conclude by making some suggestions as to what sort of arrangements might arguably need to be introduced to promote role sharing and prevent the introduction of a basic income scheme to lead to a reinforcement of the GDL. I think two types of measures are necessary: measures enabling couples willing to share roles to act on their will, and measures promoting role sharing so as to increase the number of couples willing to share roles.

Enabling measures should aim at redefining the demands we as a society set on workers and carers, so that meeting them simultaneously becomes a true possibility. They should secure availability of jobs permitting both parents to free enough time to fulfill their caring responsibilities at home (possibly through shorter work hours for all workers plus a right for workers to further reduce their work hours to attend caring responsibilities, and a variety of leaves, as endorsed by Gornick and Meyers 2003). Affordable and easily available high quality care services and adaptable school schedules would also be needed (for even if both parents are willing to work shorter hours, it will be difficult for most to arrange work schedules so that they can do without any external care).

Promoting measures, on the other hand, should aim at changing traditional gender norms and may include the following. First, direct educational efforts on children and adolescents at school may prove necessary, possibly in the form of classes discussing how to combine work and family responsibilities for both girls and boys, preferably taught by male teachers. These courses could make adolescents aware of the legal rights assisting them in the challenge to combine paid work and caring responsibilities and of the reasons supporting them. They could also provide training, especially for boys, in the necessary skills of a good caregiver. In so doing, these courses would create adolescents that would be better equipped for the challenge before them, while also giving a different impression of the social expectations regarding the allocation of caring responsibilities. Second, measures to fight gender stereotypes in textbooks, advertising and television shows directed at children would be required. These could include a combination of conscience rising, economic incentives to present characters in non-stereotypical roles and prohibition in certain cases. Finally, different kinds of policies could be introduced creating incentives for couples to behave in accordance with egalitarian gender norms. This would be good in itself and would

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14 Susan Moller Okin (1989: 177) suggests this possibility in passing, but she does not spell out neither the precise content nor the specific purposes of these courses.
additionally help establish role sharing as normal (in a purely statistical sense) and ultimately as normative. These or other arrangements that may prove more efficacious need to be designed and put to practice if we are to move towards a society where the GDL is abolished and men and women are no longer pressed by social norms and institutions to deny or forfeit half their humanity, and where women no longer have to bear the consequences of having been assigned the less valued half. As we move towards such society, a basic income can be trusted to support those at the forefront, while keeping those at the back safe and enabling them to move forward.

References


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15 Harry Brighouse and Erik Olin Wright (2007) have argued for this general strategy as a way of promoting more egalitarian gender norms, inspired by the success of the policies banning smoking in public places in changing the relevant social norms drastically over a couple of decades.


