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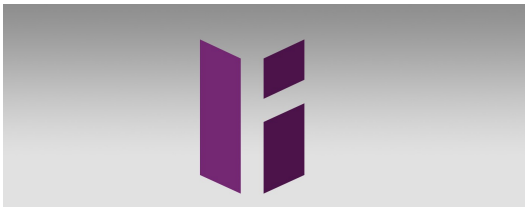

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Chapter 7

Selfless Women in Capitalism?

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Introduction

In his text "Why Women Vanish As They Move Up The Career Ladder", Bob Sherwin (2014a) lists three groups of explanations of why women are not present in senior management positions. He lists them under "statements women themselves would make": 1. "I don't want the role"; 2. "I can't succeed in the role"; and 3. "I can't have the role." Under each of these categories, Sherwin discusses different practical, psychological, discriminatory, etc. reasons that women *choose* not to advance (our italics, Sherwin, 2014a). The data Sherwin presented are even more confusing since, as he showed in an earlier text, he believed that women are, in broad terms, more successful leaders in business than men (Sherwin, 2014b). However, Sherwin, in his popular texts, instead of touching upon a deeper problem underlying this question, remained on a more pragmatic level of everyday business situations.

Our chapter aims to do exactly that – to go deeper. However, it will be, but a modest theoretical contribution to answering the vexing question of why in societies, which are presently considered the most advanced from economical, legal, and cultural perspectives – in the so-called "Western World" – in business women still occupy between one quarter and one third of senior management positions even though, in the West, around 45% of employees are women. In the European Union, 25.3 % of the senior management positions are occupied by women as of 2017 (compared to 10.4 % in 2007) (Eurostat, 2018). In Canada, there are 28.9 % women occupying senior management occupations in 2017 (Statistics Canada, 2018). In the United States, there are 26.5 % women among the senior-

level officials and managers in the S&P 500 Companies as of 2018 (Catalyst, 2018). In Australia the situation is better: there are 34.9 % women occupying positions of senior managers in 2017 (The Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2018).

There are many answers from various theoretical horizons that can be offered to the question of "why women vanish as they move up the career ladder", just to list them all would be a text on its own. However, instead of discussing or refuting any particular position, our goal is to offer an additional explanation of this problem from a perspective that at once seems so trivially obvious and yet surprisingly neglected in academic and popular literature.

Our position, in short, can be summarized in the form of the following syllogism:

1. Women are selfless.
2. Capitalism is based on selfishness.
3. Therefore, capitalism is not a suitable "habitat" for women.[1]

A following corollary can be derived from the conclusion: since capitalism is not a suitable "habitat" for women, women's advancement within capitalist hierarchy is more difficult. Of course, this does not preclude that there are different other factors, unrelated to the specific nature of capitalism, that have a negative impact on women's climbing the corporate ladder: some of the psychological ones are listed in the above-mentioned Sherwin's text, a lot of feminists – and some Marxist – literature is dedicated to analyzing the sociological aspect of our predominantly patriarchic society for unequal positions of men and women, etc. However, the difference between our approach and the others is that ours is "essentialist": our claim is that capitalism *in its essence* is at least partially incompatible with "being woman." Career advancement, usually tied with the financial advancement, is one of the constitutive elements of capitalism as a system. If the system itself is not tailored to them, women are less likely to advance within it.

Obviously, both premises as well as the conclusion, are controversial, and the rest of the text will be dedicated to elucidating these controversies.

[1] Of course, this is not a syllogism in the formal sense of logic, it could be subsumed under a natural language deductive argument (on "natural language deductivism" see: Groarke, 1999). However, as the majority (or all, Walton & Gordon, 2015) of informal argument, this one could be formalized.

Premise 1: Women are selfless.

Sometime around fourth century BC, a bitter attack on an Athenian citizen, a certain Stephanus, was launched by his rival, Apollodorus, in form of suing Neaera. She, claimed Apollodorus, being herself an alien, was living as a wife with Stephanus. The Athenian law of the time said that such a woman should upon conviction be sold as a slave, and that the man living with her should be fined one thousand drachmae. In the juridical oration, i.e., Apollodorus's indictment, preserved in Demosthenic corpus (and most likely not being composed by Demosthenes himself) Apollodorus explains the role of women in Greek society in the following words:

> Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of our bodies, but wives to bear us legitimate children and to be faithful guardians of our households. (Demosthenes, 1939, p.445–447, translation slightly modified.)

This classical and unfortunate tripartition of women into "mistresses", "concubines" and "wives" is not limited just to classical antiquity. There is a plethora of feminist literature showing that in recent times, such as the nineteenth century, the tripartition of women into "lovers", "prostitutes" and "wives" as three most common roles for women was taken for granted – it is no wonder that Herodotus' quote was so popular in the nineteenth century. These roles have a common denominator: it is *care for others*. Either in an emotional, erotic/intellectual (as ancient Greek *hetairai* or Japanese *geishas*) and sexual manner, or for the family, women are there to care for others. As the historian Linda Kerber has already established, this division of men who engage in public, political, and business sphere, and women who realize themselves through caring for others within households is as old as the Western civilization and has in a large part defined what the virtue of a good woman is: good woman is the one who is successful in caring for others (Kerber, 1986, p.306).

That caring is "women's work" – of course not any more in the antiquated tripartition mentioned above – is also reflected in most recent analysis issued by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality and commissioned, supervised and published by the Policy Department for Citizen's Rights and Constitutional Affairs (Davaki, 2016). The report shows that when paid working hours are united with unpaid work hours and time spent in commuting, women work on average longer than men (64 hours vs 53 hours). It is noteworthy that men spend on average only 9 hours dedicated to caring activities, while women – 26 hours. So, even today, unfortunately in many aspects of our society, caring is thought to be one of the principal women's work. The tight bond

between caring and womanhood is especially prominent in more traditionalist milieus. For instance, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* by the Pope John Paul II (1981), after establishing the equal dignity and responsibility of men and women in chapter 22, in the following chapter the Exhortation claims:

> While it must be recognized that women have the same right as men to perform various public functions, society must be structured in such a way that wives and mothers are not in practice compelled to work outside the home, and that their families can live and prosper in a dignified way even when they themselves devote their full time to their own family. Furthermore, the mentality which honors women more for their work outside the home than for their work within the family must be overcome. (John Paul II, 1981, ch 23.)

Nevertheless, it is underlined that a recognition of familiar and maternal role must be given by society to enhance and appreciate the development of a woman and femininity. According to the Exhortation, women are equal to men in respect to rights and dignity, but their natural habitat is home and family, they are supposed to *devote their full time* to others. Society, that is men, should see to that women should not be obliged (we read: encouraged or even indirectly disallowed) to work "outside the home." Moreover, such societies which support or even encourage women to work "outside the home" must be overcome, says the Exhortation. It is quite unclear what "overcoming" in this context would mean.

Parallel invectives can be found in our time also outside official Catholic teaching. For instance, some decades ago, in 1973, there was the first edition of the book entitled *The Total Woman* by Marabel Morgan. It is a simple self-help book for a woman to be happy as a married wife. Morgan's position is summarized in three pieces of advice she explicitly gives to wives: 1. be nice to your husband, compliment him, tell him he's great; 2. stop nagging at him and trying to change him; 3. understand and try to fulfill his sexual needs. Similarly and more recently, in 2011, Costanza Miriano published a book entitled *Sposati e sii sottomessa* (in English translated as *Marry Him and Be Submissive*) in which Miriano goes a step further than Morgan (whom Miriano does not mention in her book): there is no happiness for a woman outside marriage, in which woman has to take care of her husband and children. According to Miriano (2011), submissiveness is the only successful path to women's happiness.

As one would expect, both books received strong reactions from both extremes. There would be nothing special about these books – even flat-

earthers publish some books – were it not for their being global best sellers: Morgan's book was sold in more than 10 million copies as of 2008 (Donaldson, 2008) and Miriano's book has been translated into six languages so far and is in on its best way to global popularity.

In a brilliant phenomenological analysis of the elusive concept of care, Julia Wood (1994) argues that care is not a simple concept. It rather depends on other psychological characteristics like: responsiveness, sensitivity to others, acceptance, and patience.

> To be responsive, sensitive, accepting, and patient with others depends fundamentally on being able and willing to let go of, at least temporarily, preoccupation with oneself and one's own concerns. This letting go, of course, is the basis of the pervasive association of selflessness with caring (...), (Wood, 1994, p.107).

Care depends on the ability to neglect one own's desires, needs, etc., in short, being/becoming selfless. In consequence, the concept of selflessness is more fundamental, or to use biological parlance, more rudimentary, than care, which appears to be a mixture of various qualities – Wood lists the four of them.

Before focusing on the notion of selflessness, a demarcation line should be drawn. We are not entering the discussion of the general position of selflessness, or its opposite, as a principal motivation for human behavior. Namely, in philosophical discussions, the question of predominance of selflessness (and its connate concepts like altruism, self-sacrifice, sympathy, etc.) vs. selfishness (and its connate concepts of egoism) is one of the most controversial, that occupies diametrical positions in different value systems. Some would argue that selflessness is the fundamental factor that motivates (or should motivate) human behavior (e.g., Kant, 1785; Nagel, 1970). On the other hand, there is a long tradition of those who claim that we cannot escape, but being egoistic and always act out of self-interest with the satisfaction of our own desires (e.g., Rand, 1964). Though such fundamental questions are related to our problem, it is not directly relevant since we are discussing women's selflessness regardless of broader moral consequences. For us, the most relevant fact is that in large portions of even contemporary societies good woman is the one who is perceived as selfless.

What is selflessness? The most deterministic views come from evolutionary biology, that is "biological altruism." Here the biological notion of selflessness or selfishness diverges from the philosophical or even everyday notions. In common parlance, an important requirement

for an action to be called selfish or selfless is that it was done with the conscious intention of being concentrated on oneself or helping others. However, in the biological sense, there is no such requirement. E.g., there is evidence of "altruistic behavior" among creatures what are not conscious in our meaning of the word (e.g., insects, bats, birds, etc., Lozada, D'Adamo, & Fuentes, 2011). Similarly, we have interesting pieces of evidence coming from neuroscience. Moll et al. (2006) showed that the mesolimbic reward system would be engaged by donations in the same way as when monetary rewards are obtained. These findings indirectly support an "essentialist" interpretation. Essentialism entails "the attribution of a fixed essence to women. Women's essence is assumed to be given and universal and is usually, though not necessarily, identified with women's biology and "natural' characteristics" (Grosz, 1994, p.47). So for an essentialist, women's inclinations towards selflessness and care would be a part of their biological constitution. This is supported by some most recent findings showing that female and male brains display different reaction to selfless and selfish behavior, with women's brain showing a stronger reward signal for selfless behavior than men's (Soutschek et al., 2017).

On the other hand, Miller (1976) and Gilligan (1982) strongly emphasize the psychological factors as the crucial motivation. Miller thus writes:

> Women's great desire for affiliation is both a fundamental strength (...) and at the same time the inevitable source of many of women's current problems. (...) When women act on the basis of this underlying psychological motive [for affiliation], they are usually led into subservience. (Miller,1976, p.82.)

Similar to biological or physiological/neurological determinism, psychological determinism would suggest that, if we are psychologically determined, then in some way our control over our behavior is limited. Our behavior is determined by our nature which would absorb those social factors that become internalized into an individual so that they become a part of her very nature. In our specific case social factors – e.g., that selflessness is imposed on women by family, society, etc. – should be taken into consideration attentively since they present the basis of the still dominant distinction between sex and gender going back to Simone de Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* (1949) and her famous dictum that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." However many contemporary feminists are taking a critical stance toward the crude distinction between sex as biologically given fact, and gender as a social construct, still majority of present-day gender philosophers have not entirely given up

the view that gender is about social factors and that it is distinct from biological sex – in whatever way (Mikkola, 2017).

One of the *crux* of grasping the notion of selflessness is that it includes two different connotations. On the one hand, on the grammatical level, the word implies "the loss of the self", with all its catastrophic consequences, like invisibility, subservient passivity, etc. In the case of feminist theories, it is a negative counterpart to the masculinized view of selfhood, its negative corollary. On the other hand, the term is tightly bound with the concept of altruism, promoting the good of the others at the expense of oneself, a self-sacrifice for the sake of others. Thusly understood, selflessness is a universally admirable and desirable characteristic for which both men and women are praised. Those who see selflessness as a basis of morality would argue that it is hard to see how someone could be claimed to be moral if he or she is not willing to sacrifice themselves, their time, comfort, sometimes even well-being or health for the sake of others.

A *caveat* should be put here. By no means, we want to suggest that *all* women are selfless by nature or by society's formation with the implication that selfish woman would be an aberration from the normal. We don't even enter the question of whether the majority of women are or aren't selfless if this could be measured and established in any way. We also don't enter into discussing how to characterize caring for someone out of selfish motives etc. Our position is that women are still – unfortunately – supposed to be selfless in virtue of their being women, i.e., our society still promotes selflessness as a cardinal women's virtue, as one of the most characteristic realizations of womanhood. Thus, for the validity of our argument, it does not matter which side of the essentialist vs. anti-essentialist debate over "women's nature" one takes. It should also be mentioned that in modern societies we can witness the phenomenon of "reversed gender roles", i.e., women become income-earners while men stay at home and care for the family. However, recent studies show that the labor force participation rates of women are still much below those of men. Thus the average labor participation rates of men 80 % and women are 64 % (Chamie, 2018). Of course, these rates differ significantly between traditional societies, such as India, where the difference between men and women is 52 %, and the Scandinavian countries where the difference is 4 %. In Italy, it is 20 %, in Japan, 17 %, and in the United States, 11 %. It is not only that parenthood has an opposite impact for men and women, as the study shows. Chamie (2018) also concludes that in all regions, women spend at least twice as much time as men on caregiving responsibilities and housework, which clearly affects women's employment rate.

The situation now is significantly better than in the past. However, it still corroborates our thesis that selflessness – here in the form of caring for family – is still, at a global level, an expected women's work. This is also supported by Gallup's survey from 2015 which shows that most women with children in the US still themselves *prefer* homemaking role (56 %, Saad, 2015).

Premise 2: Capitalism is based on selfishness.

It has been traditionally and widely accepted, as for a fact, that the main motivational factor of capitalism is selfishness (greed, egotism, etc.). Let us just take an example of one of the most classic *loca* that would testify to that. The starting point is that capitalism is a realization of human being, who is, as J. S. Mill (in)famously writes:

> (...) a being who inevitably does that by which he may obtain the greatest amount of necessaries, conveniences, and luxuries, with the smallest quantity of labor and physical self-denial with which they can be obtained in the existing state of knowledge. (Mill, 1874: V.46.)

What does it mean that capitalism is founded on human selfishness and greed? However old these ideas may be (we can find them scattered across Greek philosophy, Machiavelli, etc.), the philosopher famous for insisting on selfishness and greed as the basic human motivation for possessing private property and who is often seen as a precursor and anticipator of modern-age capitalism is Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). Hobbes is known for a bleak vision of human nature, *homo homini deus et homo homini lupus* being his leading mottos. He argues that the state of nature is a miserable state of war and that in such a condition we cannot fully realize our ends – thus the nature has provided us with rationality as a tool to create peace so that we could realize our selfish interests. Hobbes famously writes in the "Epistle dedicatory" of his second most famous work, *Elementa philosophical de cive*, or, shortly, *On the Citizen*, explaining two postulates of human nature:

> (...) one, the postulate of human greed by which each man insists upon his own private use of common property; the other, the postulate of natural reason, by which all man strives to avoid violent death as the supreme evil in nature. (Hobbes, 1998, p.5–6).

Prima facie (i.e., putting aside more charitable interpretations of Hobbes's words) it looks rather straight forward: we all basically want two things: to avoid death and to get everything we want to get. If this is what human nature is about, then selfishness – taking care of oneself and satisfying one's own needs and desires – turns out to be the main motivating factor of human behavior. A similar thought is also expressed by Adam Smith in his *The Wealth of Nations* from 1776:

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard of their own interest. (Smith, 1957/1776, p.13.)

It is understandable that neither butcher nor brewer nor almost any other person wants to work for free or just give away her goods out of the goodness of her heart. Economic transactions, when they function normally, presuppose that each party seeks an outcome that it considers beneficial for itself. Capitalism is based on self-interest which is justified by the recurrence to the presupposed fundamental selfishness of human nature.

Here someone may argue that self-interest and selfishness, although in contemporary, mostly political, discourse are used interchangeably, are not the same. The distinction may go along the following lines: selfishness is marked by a lack of consideration for others. For a selfish person, the self is the highest criterion. On the other hand, self-interest is looking for the best ways to promote one's welfare. In principle, this can include caring for others as a way to promote one's own welfare. So one could argue that, even though human nature might be presupposed to be selfish, capitalism itself is based on a mitigated form of selfishness, i.e., self-interest which might include also selfless acts.

If we accept this distinction, this does not really influence our argument for two reasons. First, capitalists (here: participants in the arena of capitalism), when they do selfless deeds – and obviously there are many such deeds – do them not *qua* capitalists, but *qua* good or selfless people. If a person gives money to a charity organization out of the goodness of her heart, she is doing it motivated by her goodness, she might have done the same under any socio-economic system such as communism, or feudalism, or slavery, there is nothing "capitalistic" about her act of charity. If a person gives money to a charity organization expecting some financially profitable outcome, such as tax deduction, then the welfare of the other is an instrument for one's own self-interested or selfish profit, put as a final goal of the transaction. Second, selflessness, on the one hand, and self-interest and/or selfishness, on the other hand, are

opposites in *directionality*. Selflessness may be understood as an intention directed towards other people – up to the extreme point of completely neglecting oneself. Self-interest and/or selfishness may be understood as an intention directed towards oneself – either in a form that does not exclude selfless acts as a means of satisfying one's own desires and needs or in a form that excludes such acts. In either case, the directions of those intentions are opposite than the one of selflessness.

If we accept self-interest or selfishness as fuel running the machine of capitalism, it is not meant as a critique of capitalism. Even if self-interest, taken in its most negative expressions such as greed, is a motivating factor, it does not entail that the result of such a complex system must turn out bad. There is a powerful justification for capitalism that says that when individuals strive after reaching their selfish ends in the market, an overall effect of this is that goods are allocated in a socially beneficial way. As the title of Mandeville's book from 1714 suggests: private vices become public goods mediated in the arena of the open market; if true, this would mean that there is a magic in capitalist markets to turn (private) vice of greed and selfishness into a (public) virtue.

A slightly different line of defense comes from the Scottish philosopher David Hume. For him the

> if human needs and wants are successfully fulfilled only in society, and if selfishness and avidity stand in the way, that is, constitute impediments to social organization, then only a system of private property is justified because only such a system can mitigate the potentially disruptive forces of selfishness. (Panichas, 1983, p.398.)

This argument sees the role of capitalism as a socially positive factor: it is good because it somehow mitigates selfishness, by structuring it within the social rules that a capitalistic order dictates.

Here another *caveat* should be mentioned. Our argument does not rely on the *truism* that human is inexorably selfish. Even on the contrary, we believe it is not. It is about the dominant *belief* that originated in the Early Modern Era about human nature as selfish and greedy that has become generally accepted as the main explanation of a motivating factor of capitalism and as an integral part of capitalistic self-evaluation. It does not matter if one takes selfishness as a starting point of capitalism or sees capitalism as a system that mitigates the wild human nature – i.e., stands in a negative relationship to it, exists for the sake of negating it. It is important that we for traditional reasons we *perceive* and *tolerate* capitalism as an expression of human selfishness.

Conclusion: Capitalism is not a suitable "habitat" for women

There are so many different attacks on capitalism that it would be hard just to name from which perspectives they come. However, capitalism, as a system, has been relatively rarely discussed from an ethical perspective by analytic philosophers. This is especially striking given that most of the analytic political philosophers are typically "robust egalitarians" (Illy-Williamson, 2017, p.415). Capitalism not only tolerates huge social and economic inequalities which are not consequences of personal choices and gives an opportunity to a proportionally insignificant percentage of people to have an immense political influence but also in itself seems to be bound to perpetuating the inequality gap, if we are to trust Piketty's world-best-seller analysis (Piketty, 2014). From this perspective, it would seem only natural for an egalitarian to launch her attacks on such a system. Thus, all the justified and corroborated attacks on capitalism coming from these perspectives are equally applicable to men and women.

Moreover, there are also quite a few attacks on capitalism as a female-inimical system. For instance, Gimenez (2005) makes a special application of Marxist theories of production on the position of women within the capitalist mode of production, and the organization of physical and social reproduction among those who must sell their labor power to survive women make a significant part. On the other hand, there are many texts criticizing capitalism as an expression of patriarchy with all the pernicious consequences for women. In this context, one can read about male exploitation of women based on a sexual division of labor, about lack for rights and discrimination against women, different forms of harassment, representing social inequalities as natural and normal, the question of evaluation of women's domestic work, etc. The groundbreaking book in this context is the collection of seventeen texts in the book entitled *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* and edited by Z. R. Eisenstein (1978).

However, in our approach, we took a different turn. Personal identity depends on social roles which some individual exhibits in a society. Personal identity also depends on the accepted and/or imposed value system which reflects itself in everyday behavior toward other individuals. In our analysis, there is an obvious conflict between the role women traditionally still take in most of the present-day societies as selfless caregivers and the supposed principle of capitalism that is care for oneself

and one's own property. It is an obvious conflict of roles that is especially prominent among women: the traditional role of a businessperson is opposite to the role of a selfless caregiver. From this unfortunate standpoint, "to be a businesswomen or to be a virtuous woman/wife?" seems to be an either-or question which is hard to answer just by a distribution of a "work time" and "private time."

This conflict could be resolved – logically and rationally – either by making capitalism less selfish or making women less selfless or both. These both positions have many proponents: e.g., a trained clinical psychologist Oliver James (2008) argues, bluntly, that selfish capitalism is bad for our mental health. On the other hand, the whole movements of so-called second, and now third, feminism are concentrated around breaking the traditional roles of women in society – and thus the role of woman as a caregiver.

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Chapter 8

Prosocial Vocational Interests and Gender in the Labor Market

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Introduction

Prosocial interests share a common ground with the selfless attitude in terms of going beyond one's objectives and focusing upon the interests/needs of others. The literature of the subject offers findings regarding the diversity of vocational interests across gender. These indicate women as the group manifesting stronger social interests than men (Su, Rounds, & Armstrong, 2009; Thompson, Donnay, Morris, & Schaubhut, 2004). At the same time, these findings are associated with the stereotype of a social role of women linked with the involvement in interpersonal relations and with care (Wood & Eagly, 2010, 2012; Mandal, 2004). The objective of the present study is to verify the diversification of prosocial interests across gender and age.

Vocational identity and the course of the career undergo dynamic changes throughout one's lifetime, even after they reach maturity. As a consequence, it is associated with the instability of vocational interests over time (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996). On the other hand, according to John L. Holland (1999), vocational interests constitute fixed dispositional features. The trajectory of vocational interests' stability gains an upward trend between 18 and 21 years of age. This means that vocational interests remain relatively stable and crystallize in this particular life period (Low, Yoon, Roberts, & Rounds, 2005).

Apart from the already acknowledged personality features (individual determinants) (Stoll et al., 2017), social determinants ought to be taken into account as well. These may exert an impact upon the intensity of vocational interests. Vocational clock constitutes one of the social factors. It indicates the dynamic intensity of vocational interests with regard to social expectations determined by age and gender (Ochnik & Rosmus, 2016).