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Book Symposium: Asha Bhandary's *Freedom to Care*

Introduction to Symposium on Asha Bhandary's
Freedom to Care

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Abstract

In this introduction, I offer a broad overview of Asha Bhandary's *Freedom to Care: Liberalism, Dependency Care, and Culture* so that readers can better situate the suggestions of this symposium's contributors: Clark Wolf, Elizabeth Edenberg, and Helga Varden. Bhandary develops and defends the theory of liberal dependency care in response to the failure of past liberal theorizing to appreciate that dependency care — which is essential to our survival — is a matter of justice. By concluding with a Hamptonian framing, I hope to further generate discussion of this novel work that broadens the influence of contemporary feminist liberal theorizing.

Résumé

Dans cette introduction, je propose un survol de *Freedom to Care: Liberalism, Dependency Care, and Culture* d'Asha Bhandary, afin que les lecteurs puissent mieux situer les suggestions des contributeurs au symposium, Clark Wolf, Elizabeth Edenberg et Helga Varden. Bhandary développe et défend la théorie libérale de la prise en charge de la dépendance en réponse à l'échec des théories libérales passées à reconnaître que cette prise en charge de la dépendance, qui est essentielle à notre survie, relève de la justice. En terminant, je tisse des liens avec la philosophie de Jean Hampton, afin de stimuler la discussion autour des travaux inédits de Bhandary, qui élargissent l'influence de la théorisation libérale féministe contemporaine.

Keywords: autonomy; Asha Bhandary; dependency care; Jean Hampton; liberalism

1. Introduction

The urgency of Asha Bhandary's message in *Freedom to Care* should not be lost on us: we must expose and remedy liberal theorizing's widespread failure to recognize the centrality of dependency care to just institutions. Dependency care is that “intensive, hands-on care provided by another” that we could not survive without (Bhandary, 2020, p. 2). One illustrative example is the revelation that in the first 19

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months of the pandemic, at least 5.2 million children globally have experienced the loss of a caregiver to COVID-19 (and this was prior to the devastating Omicron variant; Medina, 2022). While not all of these children are lacking dependency care, surely some of them are. Our local and global institutions are currently ill-equipped to fill the gaps left in their care, compounding their vulnerability. This situation is ripe for perpetuating injustice in two ways: failing to meet the demands of dependency care these children require, and failing to distribute the labour providing this care requires in a way that is sensitive to domination and oppression.

Bhandary's theory of liberal dependency care (LDC) explicitly circumvents both injustices, something other liberal theorizing simply has not done. LDC does this by ensuring that receipt of dependency care is integrated into a modified Rawlsian basic structure and articulating how the duties of providing dependency care can be justly distributed, respectively. Additionally, Bhandary offers us tools to facilitate transitional justice to avoid precisely these situations moving forward. To understand the scope and intention of her work, I find her closing remark helpful: "Liberal dependency care supplies normative guidance in the form of an account of distributive justice, but it leaves open the details of how people should live" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 199). Throughout, Bhandary develops an anti-oppression account that counters the historic failure of distributive justice theorizing to properly appreciate the necessity and provision of dependency care that is also fundamentally committed to individuals' autonomy. Striking a balance between institutionally valuing dependency care *and* autonomy is challenging, and I admire Bhandary for successfully doing so.

I also admire how she incorporates that our perspectives greatly shape and limit our theorizing. Bhandary flags early on that she is "a philosopher thoroughly grounded in the Anglo-American liberal tradition," which values how lived experiences impact theory (Bhandary, 2020, p. x). This is apparent throughout both Part I of the work, which focuses on developing the two-level contract theory of LDC, as well as Part II, which attends to the practices, principles, and change required for just caregiving practices in our society. In this introduction, I offer a broad overview of *Freedom to Care* for those who haven't yet had the opportunity to closely engage with it (Sections 2 and 3), and highlight where this volume's commenters — Clark Wolf, Elizabeth Edenberg, and Helga Varden — suggest there is room for further consideration (Section 4). I conclude this introduction by briefly framing LDC through a Hamptonian lens (Section 5), with the hope of further generating discussion of this novel work, which broadens the influence of contemporary feminist liberal theorizing.

2. Theory

As mentioned above, Part I of *Freedom to Care* takes up matters of how we ought to go about liberal theorizing. This part of the book immediately follows an introductory overview chapter, "The Theory of Liberal Dependency Care," and contains four chapters: "A Rawlsian Response to Kittay's Dependency Critique" (Chapter 2), "The Arrow of Care Map" (Chapter 3), "Other-Directedness in Contract Theory" (Chapter 4), and "Autonomy Skills" (Chapter 5). Many of the concerns raised by Wolf, Edenberg, and Varden fall within the scope of Part I, with Varden also raising concerns with features of Part II. In this section, I'll summarize and contextualize

each of the four chapters so that readers can appropriately situate the commenters' contributions (Section 4).

Chapter 1. Although Bhandary offers motivating reasons, I take it as a given that matters of care fall clearly within the scope of justice and ought not to be disproportionately foisted upon individuals on the basis of morally arbitrary features like gender, race, nationality, or class (Bhandary, 2020, p. 2). LDC undermines oppression along these dimensions by making visible society's implicit care arrangements so that care can be more fairly distributed, rather than continuing to place disproportionate burdens on historically oppressed populations. Another way that LDC undermines oppression is by recognizing that receipt of dependency care is integral to gaining the independence required to live "a life governed by one's own commitments and values" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 1). As I see it, without this basic good, we simply could not fully flourish. One important thing to note up front is that Bhandary's account is concerned solely with the activities and skills involved in dependency care, setting aside the affective dimensions altogether.

To address the skewed intuitions about care that appear in liberal theorizing and more broadly — by virtue of "social forms and cultural constructions" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 5) — Bhandary offers several solutions in Part I: a revised Rawlsian approach to care, where extreme human dependence is known to those in the original position and where receipt of care is a sixth primary good (Chapter 2), the arrow of care map to track caregiving arrangements (Chapter 3), four new principles of justice (Chapter 4), and a defence of autonomy that sidesteps objections that liberalism inadequately addresses oppression (Chapter 5).

Bhandary's work, in offering each of these solutions, is rooted in the tradition of feminist liberalism. She critiques the gendered division of labour and inequality in dependency care, arguing that family is within the scope of justice — following Susan Moller Okin (1989) — without presuming that the nuclear family is the sole place care ought to occur (Bhandary, 2020, p. 9). She explicitly responds to challenges that care ethicists — primarily, Eva Feder Kittay (1999) — raise against liberalism.¹ LDC demonstrates how we can embrace a Rawlsian picture that has precisely these sensitivities in the domain of care, presumably setting a precedent for sensitivity in other domains as well. This is possible, in part, by appreciating that we can be vulnerable to more than attack (i.e., lack of dependency care) — something that non-feminist contract theory has not recognized. I now turn to a more detailed explication of the four chapters in Part I.

Chapter 2. In "A Rawlsian Response to Kittay's Dependency Critique," Bhandary presents a liberal approach that addresses concerns she shares with care ethicists, most clearly expressed by Kittay. Kittay's dependency critique is that "any contemporary political theory claiming to be egalitarian must address dependency care needs because — when principled arrangements for dependency care are absent" two issues arise: (i) "... the people who care for dependent persons suffer disadvantages because of their labor as caregivers" and (ii) there is a failure to recognize the care needs of dependents as legitimate moral claims (Bhandary, 2020, pp. 23–24). The way to best avoid

¹ Bhandary's account also implicitly addresses Iris Marion Young's (1990) concern that the distributive paradigm of justice is inherently insensitive to domination and oppression.

these issues, according to Kittay, is to begin political theory from the recognition that we are all necessarily dependent at some point in our lives and utilize Robert Goodin's (1985) vulnerability model for social cooperation (Bhandary, 2020, p. 24).

Bhandary goes in a different direction. To avoid the first issue (the oppression of caregivers), she looks to social contract theory instead. This is because Kittay's principle of *doulia* ultimately "underspecifies how we should evaluate conflicts between the needs of the two parties" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 30). The principle of *doulia* requires that the work to sustain a dependency relation between a caregiver and recipient of care not be to the disadvantage of either party. But, *doulia* does not differentiate between the interests of the caregiver and the recipient, obscuring important differences and failing to recognize the caregiver as a "self-authenticating source of valid claims ... [that] have weight apart from the duties and obligations one owes to society" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 28, paraphrasing Rawls, 2001, p. 23). In this way, the principle of *doulia* is at odds with Bhandary's Rawlsian commitments that "no person's claims are derivative of another person, and that there is an imprint from each person on their own claims as the claims that represent their interests ... [ensuring] that the person will not be made into a subordinate tool" or that their subordination can be identified and ultimately remedied (Bhandary, 2020, pp. 39–40). Bhandary wishes to generally maintain the original position, but to make representatives affectively caring, she argues, would "conflict with a core commitment of [Rawls's] theory: that the principles of justice be selected by modeling mutual disinterest from behind the veil of ignorance" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 31). At the same time, the reason we ought to prioritize self-authentication as a normative ideal is that it requires respect for "the choices of the dependency worker as a person who has value independent of her obligations to the charge" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 42). While caring individuals aren't represented in the original position, a commitment to self-authentication allows us to respect their autonomous choices — in the real world — to prioritize caring about others among their values.

To address the second issue Kittay's critique highlights, Bhandary argues that what needs to be modified in Rawls's account "is his failure to include extreme human dependence as a fact known to participants in the original position" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 33). From this inclusion, it follows that "to receive care when one is unable to care for oneself" will be among the Rawlsian primary goods (Bhandary, 2020, p. 36). This is a critical contribution to the literature, importantly distinct from Kittay's suggestion. Kittay suggested that the sixth primary good ought to be "*to meet the dependency needs of others without incurring undue sacrifices*" to build in insurance that dependency workers are not disadvantaged (Kittay, 1999, p. 103). To Bhandary, conflating both sides of dependency care problematically ignores differences between the recipient and provider (as suggested above). When dependency care is a basic good in the way Bhandary suggests, and principles of distributive justice are arrived at using LDC's modified two-level contract theory (detailed in Chapters 4 and 5), representatives in the original position are "bound by the resultant principles of justice that determine the distribution of primary goods" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 27). This allows for representatives in the original position to know that they may be either dependent or dependency workers, and for every representative to take dependency care into account. To build upon Rawls's account in this way avoids

Kittay's concern that dependency workers are disadvantaged in the original position because they would only be permitted to represent themselves (and not also those who are dependent upon them). In other words, LDC guarantees the provision of dependency care to those requiring it and guards against oppression of caregivers while respecting their individuality.

However, by modifying the original position instead of scrapping it (as Kittay would ultimately prefer), Bhandary's account is left vulnerable to the same ableist charge that Rawls's theory faces: those with extreme cognitive disabilities are excluded from equal citizenship due to their inability to reciprocate, which results in their interests not being represented in the original position. In other words, even though dependency workers may be properly represented in LDC, not all dependents will be. Bhandary is equipped to resist this criticism, though. She clarifies that "Rawlsian reciprocity is not violated by the failure to provide benefits directly to a particular person who has provided them to you. ... [It] is violated only when care is distributed in such a way that the representatives of people doing the work of care would not agree to the ... distribution" (Bhandary, 2020, pp. 34–35). This, paired with the explicit statement that persons with disabilities have inherent moral value, can counteract the "negative expressive effects" that arise from excluding cognitively disabled persons from the original position (Bhandary, 2020, p. 45). With this, I'll now turn to "The Arrow of Care Map."

Chapter 3. In proposing the arrow of care map, Bhandary aims to alleviate oppression that arises through the theoretical invisibility of dependency care (Bhandary, 2020, p. 54). The map is intended to serve two functions: (i) to "organize fact-finding about societies' caregiving arrangements," and (ii) to "guide thinking about what a fair arrangement will be by enabling us to sketch maps of hypothetical societies" (Bhandary, 2020, pp. 56–57). Considering Bhandary's commitments to reasonable pluralism and offering a cross-cultural view, the map leaves room for "different societies [to] arrive at different conclusions about what constitutes a fair caregiving arrangement" without imposing strict exchange reciprocity (Bhandary, 2020, p. 55). Justice in caregiving must be evaluated, though, on three levels: the overarching distribution, group-based trends, and the justice of arrangements (including how we secure long-term needs; Bhandary, 2020, p. 71).

By representing the direction of hands-on care between agents with arrows of varying widths to indicate intensity and lengths to indicate duration, the map ultimately allows us to see care as a given and received fundamental social good that is prior to — not dependent on — our economic structure. However, the map "does not seek to capture the whole truth of the role of caring relationships" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 57). Bhandary explicitly states that the map, when paired with an account of just distributions, removes the theoretical possibility of unfairly gaining advantage from actively avoiding the unrecognized labour of others (Bhandary, 2020, p. 55).

Chapter 4. After explaining the reasons for the past failure of social contract theory to acknowledge care, Bhandary expresses hope that it will improve upon gaining the arrows of care map to identify inequalities, ultimately allowing us to formulate idealizations that will combat said inequalities. This chapter focuses more narrowly on how we ought to idealize the parties in the original position as free from other-directedness (contra care ethicists) and the four principles of justice that will follow;

the way we arrive at these principles constitutes the first level of justification in LDC's two-level contract theory. Parties in the Rawlsian original position ought to continue to be theorized as mutually disinterested — rather than other-directed — because to replace them with caring people may perpetuate the harmful inequalities that arise from an expectation to be caring. To require only self-interest of the representatives “circumvents this cluster of deeply entrenched assumptions, thereby facilitating an evaluation of benefits and burdens with greater promise to attain critical distance from existing inequalities” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 78).

The need for dependency care becomes relevant when negotiating the bounds of reasonableness. Bhandary argues that there are three facts that need to be included among what is known to the representatives in the original position: “(1) we all have care needs, (2) we want our care needs to be met, and (3) we do not want our life plans to be unduly restricted by caregiving” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 85). With this new information, we arrive at four new principles for just care from behind the veil of ignorance (Bhandary, 2020, pp. 89–91).

- Survival Baseline Principle: First, parties in the original position will share a desire to receive enough care to survive.
- Anti-Disadvantage Principle: The person who is the caregiver should not be disadvantaged by virtue of their role as a caregiver.
- No-Correlation-To-Disadvantaged-Social-Groups Principle: Caregiving must not be the responsibility of a social group that is already disadvantaged.
- Limited-Concentration Principle: Caregiving must not be concentrated in a small group of individuals, even if those individuals have nothing else in common besides being caregivers.

After dependency care is addressed justly with these principles, individual flourishing hinges “on the availability of opportunities to live a life one finds valuable” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 92). In order to determine what people who understand themselves as a source of self-authenticating claims would endorse, the contract device must be supplemented. To do this, Bhandary introduces the second level of justification for LDC's two-level contract theory: the requirement for autonomy skills that “safeguard and increase the extent to which other people in the real world exercise their own voices to articulate their values” and dissent, both privately and politically (Bhandary, 2020, p. 95).

Chapter 5. Bhandary argues that autonomy skills improve the overall legitimacy of LDC in a culturally sensitive and broadly applicable way, becoming the second level of justification in this two-level contract theory. Autonomy skills include “observation [John Stuart Mill], perceptual parsing [Mill], discrimination [Mill], communication [Diana Tietjens Meyers], introspection [Meyers], memory [Meyers], analytical reasoning [Meyers], the ability to foresee [Mill], imagination [Meyers], self-nurturing [Meyers], firmness [Mill], and self-control [Mill]” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 98; square parentheses indicate which theorist Bhandary borrows from). These all serve as a “safeguard for theories of justice and a necessary condition for every society, because real societies exist in time and can slide back into oppressive patterns or develop new ones” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 98). Additionally, when paired with the caregiving of

Chapter 7, people are given a “foundation for a balanced approach to guiding their life in a way that recognizes we exist in a world with other people” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 99).

Bhandary follows Rawls and Martha Nussbaum with regards to desiderata of liberal political autonomy, with LDC endorsing Nussbaum's five implicit criteria. The endorsement of autonomy *cannot*: (i) “rely on the claim that reason is the ultimate source of value” because this excludes religious believers, (ii) “rely on the metaphysical claim that we are all radically free” because this also excludes religious believers, (iii) “require that people pursue lives of maximal individuality” because it would lack “broad cross-cultural appeal,” (iv) “rest on the premise that ethical pluralism is true,” and (v) “result in the expressive subordination of a population with a reasonable doctrine” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 101).

With this second level, Bhandary argues that her liberalism is shallow and wide, according to Amy Baehr's (2004) taxonomy (Bhandary, 2020, p. 102). It is shallow insofar as the justification doesn't “penetrate to the point of foundational truth claims” but instead rests on those values common to reasonably pluralistic citizens (Bhandary, 2020, p. 102). And it is wide insofar as it is not concerned solely with political life, but also recognizes that “citizens are embodied human beings who will also possess [autonomy] skills in their private lives” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 102). In Part I, Bhandary offers us the theoretical tools to analyze the justice of caregiving arrangements at the macro level by including receipt of dependency care among the basic goods, arguing that people should be understood as claimants in their own right, developing LDC's two-level contract theory, illustrating the principles for receipt of care resulting from said theory, and demonstrating how to transparently map the arrows of care (Bhandary, 2020, pp. 115–116). I now turn to Part II.

3. Practice, Principles, and Change

In Part II, Bhandary shifts our focus towards the ways caregiving is embedded in our lives right now, and how we may transform our practices and relationships to become more just.

Chapter 6. In developing her account of caregiving as both a burden and an excellence, Bhandary identifies those considerations that must be taken into account when devising a principle for care provision. She does this by broadening the views of Mill — which are valuable in spite of assumptions about gender binarism and heterosexual families — because he uniquely valued the necessity of care (Bhandary, 2020, p. 117). Bhandary offers a charitable reading of Mill's common arrangement, arguing that it offers a “richer and more nuanced account” than power liberal feminism (Bhandary, 2020, p. 120). Power liberal feminism “focuses on women's greater professional advancement, increased financial gain, and freedom from caregiving responsibility” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 119).

But, power liberal feminism can also result in what Bhandary calls “care chicken” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 182), when there are no formal provisions for care. Care chicken occurs when parties who are “situated near the vulnerable charges defer responding to needs to see who will capitulate first” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 120). Unlike power liberal feminism, LDC both articulates the strict necessity of meeting the care needs of

the vulnerable and identifies the domain of caregiving as one of human genius where excellence and innovation occur (Bhandary, 2020, p. 123). Mill's views of care nicely align with this because he understands care as a complex activity using intellectual and emotional capacities; this is also consistent with Sara Ruddick's (1989) theory of maternal thinking, which requires cultivating complex skills and competencies.

However, if we understand caregiving as an excellence, then we might misunderstand providing care as always being "a way of promoting the development of the caregiver [while ignoring burdens]," and this is problematic; "history has shown us that men are all too eager to seize on this idea as a gendered one and amplify it to gain greater advantages" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 130). LDC avoids this problem with its two-level contract theory, which ultimately rejects these justifications for the gendered division of caregiving (Bhandary, 2020, p. 130). Furthermore, Bhandary specifies that if the capacity of caregiving "directly conflicts with a person's physical and emotional well-being, then it promotes self-development in only a very tenuous sense" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 130). For these reasons, caregiving ought not to be understood as a virtue; to do so would run the "risk of eliding the burdens of care" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 131).

Chapter 7. In order to more equitably share caregiving, Bhandary argues for a principle for care provision. The proposed principle is an instance of strong proceduralism because it is focused on a procedure (rather than an outcome), leaving caregiving open to individual choice, while cultivating attentiveness and responsiveness (Bhandary, 2020, p. 139). The emphasis on attentiveness and responsiveness draws on the work of Joan Tronto (1993), Ruddick (1989), Nel Noddings (1984), and Kittay (1999). This principle is intended to provide action guidance in places like the United States; as well, it unifies several elements of LDC while seeking to satisfy the four principles proposed in Chapter 4. These include: understanding each member of society as a self-authenticating claimant, the descriptive thesis about human individuality, caregiving as both an excellence and a burden, and the arrow of care map.

In practice, "anyone who is licensed to be insensible to the needs of others, which often coincides with a social position as a recipient of care who does not recognize it, needs to receive educational training in caregiving skills" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 139). This requirement is intended to remedy system-wide gendered patterns of caregiving, and recognize how one's competence is shaped by class, race, ethnicity, and immigrant origin. Bhandary considers a number of familiar objections to this proposal. She also considers candidate end-state (rather than procedural) distributive principles, as well as an alternative proposal from Kittay; I set these aside in the interest of space.

One objection involves the idea that people should not be *forced* to provide care, and they would be under LDC. Bhandary's response is that, unlike existing caregiving arrangements that already force people to provide care and unfairly distribute leisure and stress, such force is inconsistent with the results of her contract theory device. Another objection is that our arrangements are, and ought to be, a matter of choice. Here Bhandary's response is that "people's current choices arise from a cultural context with forms of prescriptive socialization for care that are linked to its invisibility" (Bhandary, 2020, p. 141). Basically, our arrangements are hardly a matter of choice,

especially for those who bear the burdens of caregiving. As a result, Bhandary builds in the threshold competency requirement: “[pursuing] a life of one’s own that adequately responds to the needs of others will include having a sense of self that does not become obliterated by the demands of caring for others, and yet that is not so rigid as to fail to make space for the lives of other people for whom one has responsibility” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 146).

Chapter 8. Building on the proposed principle in the last chapter, Bhandary offers a cross-cultural framework for assessing both culture and autonomy, which is supported by the arrow of care map. There are three metrics: the degree (i) of respect for the autonomy of individual participants, (ii) to which the conception of fairness informed by members is satisfied, and (iii) of success at meeting legitimate care needs (Bhandary, 2020, p. 159). Each of these metrics can be evaluated with the arrow of care map developed earlier on.

In order to demonstrate how her metrics are cross-cultural, Bhandary discusses an idealized form of arranged marriage. This chapter first highlights how focusing on autonomy alone in a liberal approach “insufficiently illuminates choices about culturally customary practices,” justifying the first metric (Bhandary, 2020, p. 162). Next, she argues that there is value in relational analyses of maldistributions of care, justifying the second metric. And to justify the third metric, Bhandary evaluates how arranged marriage might overlap with and depart from the necessary standard of care.

Within her argumentation, Bhandary establishes that understanding “autonomy as a capacity makes it possible to theorize a multilayered relationship between external freedoms and autonomy, neither of which is sufficient for the other” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 168). Furthermore, even when one is competent in exercising one’s autonomy, a society’s “underlying distributive arrangement and its manifestation as a cultural status quo will influence the effective freedom [one] has to reject aspects of that arrangement” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 168). Once again, it is apparent that Bhandary’s sensitivity to how individuals are influenced by their lived experiences is integral to improving upon the liberal tradition in a truly pluralistic way.

Chapter 9. In this chapter, Bhandary argues that transitional justice must account for the resistance that shifting to LDC will encounter. The concept of “being at home” (Bhandary, 2020, *passim*) plays a central role. It is understood as being intelligible to oneself and others, and is a primary source of resistance. Without acknowledging how we strive to feel at home in ourselves and our relationships (broadly construed), transitional justice will not be nearly as successful. Additionally, LDC maintains pluralism by defending “an approach to change that preserves and maintains relationships when doing so is possible and desired by the people concerned” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 181).

To better understand how being at home can occur within patriarchy, Bhandary develops a typology of men, which includes men in patriarchy, patriarchal men, and feminist men. Men in patriarchy are those who benefit from systemic gender inequality and are “insulated from the costs of dependency care; [receiving] care without providing it” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 182). Additionally, men in patriarchy have projects that “dictate structural features” of their families’ lives and are likely to have “stronger pro-attitudes toward patriarchal social forms than women” because of the

privileged position they occupy (Bhandary, 2020, p. 182). Patriarchal men are distinct insofar as they believe that “man’s dominion over woman is legitimate in some way ... that [they are] rightly advantaged thanks to being born male” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 184). Feminist men, however, actively identify how gender inequalities shape their lives, unravel sexism (not for personal gain), and recognize that the advantages received by virtue of their gender are ultimately unfair (Bhandary, 2020, p. 185).

Bhandary argues that feminism needs Joseph Raz’s (1986) “social forms” — “the context in which people live, including both institutional arrangements and culture” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 185) — to appropriately account for individuals’ self-authenticating choices during this period of transitional justice. To have effective change, feminist theorizing must secure a context for intelligible action (in part through developing autonomy skills), but this will likely also be a source of resistance. Importantly, as any anti-oppression theorist knows, resistance to change “is not a reason to avoid change altogether” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 187). For Bhandary, this is because the costs of our current injustices outweigh the benefits of passivity, and because intelligibility is partly constitutive of the value of being at home. Note that Bhandary’s next book project — tentatively titled *Being at Home: Liberal Autonomy for an Unjust World* — explores how women of colour have been denied a sense of home, a sense of intelligibility; I am very much looking forward to reading how she expands the concept, which I have no doubt will be incredibly helpful in understanding the many faces of oppression. Having offered a broad overview of Bhandary’s *Freedom to Care*, I now turn to outlining the contributions of Wolf, Edenberg, and Varden in order of when the core ideas they engage with appear in the book.

4. Symposium’s Contributions

Liberal Dependency Care Versus Subject-Centered Liberal Justice. Wolf argues that Bhandary’s LDC relies too heavily on a Humean conception of justice as reciprocity that appears in Rawls’s early work.² The Humean conception of justice necessarily precludes from the scope of justice those individuals lacking the requisite capacities “that make mutually beneficial reciprocal relationships possible” (Wolf, Section 2). Relying upon this ultimately makes Bhandary’s response to Kittay — and the respective ableist charge — regarding the lack of representation in the original position for those that are unable to participate in reciprocal relationships (Chapter 2) unsatisfying. By virtue of this Humean reliance, Bhandary fails to fully “distinguish between reciprocity-based and subject-centered conceptions of justice” (Wolf, Section 2). This implies that the claims to dependency care of those unable to reciprocally cooperate are not fundamentally claims of injustice, and instead are a much lower priority.

To preserve the positive features of LDC, Wolf suggests that it must “abandon the assumption that the parties to the original position represent the interests of persons who are roughly equal in physical and mental powers” (Wolf, Section 3). Instead, LDC ought to be constructed such that those in the original position “represent

² Varden also mentions this concern (Varden, Section 3).

the interests of *all* individuals whom we are to understand as self-authenticating sources of claims” (Wolf, Section 3, emphasis added). This is required to remain consistent with understanding as authentic the claims of those who will always require dependency care (Wolf, Section 3). To be suitably inclusive, the original position should have representation of “all members of the community of persons who are subjects of justice, who are regarded as self-authenticating sources of claims, and to whom obligations of justice are presumptively owed” (Wolf, Section 3).

Dependency Care in a Politically Liberal Society. Edenberg argues that autonomy requires its own independent justification that can satisfactorily address a pluralistic society. Without it, it's not clear that autonomy skills can ensure the legitimacy of LDC (Chapter 5). Recall that Bhandary argues that her liberalism is both shallow and wide: shallow insofar as the justification doesn't “penetrate to the point of foundational truth claims” but instead rests on those values common to reasonably pluralistic citizens (Bhandary, 2020, p. 102), and wide insofar as it is not concerned solely with political life, but also recognizes that “citizens are embodied human beings who will also possess [autonomy] skills in their private lives” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 102). While this view is appealing, Edenberg questions its plausibility on the global scale by challenging whether LDC is as shallow as Bhandary suggests.

To value autonomy so highly, according to Edenberg, “appeals to deeper and more controversial moral premises” than initially thought (Edenberg, Section 1). With a missing justificatory step, there is little argumentative evidence “why any reasonable comprehensive doctrine should accept that autonomy skills for real people are necessary for LDC's legitimacy ... [and] *why* teaching these autonomy skills can be justified to a diverse and pluralistic society” (Edenberg, Section 4).

Some might wish to reject autonomy *because* it gives people the skills necessary “to question and critically reflect on their circumstances and values” (Edenberg, Section 5). Edenberg provides the example of religious objections rooted in a concern for jeopardizing one's “true' path towards salvation” or worldviews predicated on maintaining a gendered hierarchy (Edenberg, Section 5). Importantly, Edenberg remains optimistic that the justification can be provided to ensure that those lacking Bhandary's feminist commitment should still endorse the autonomy skills of LDC. These concerns are raised primarily as an invitation to expand the account, and not to undermine its theoretical legitimacy.

A Kantian Care Engagement. Varden shares the same concern as Edenberg about the claim that LDC is shallow, but in terms of LDC's authority and its relationship to coercion. If LDC is not deep, then the “authority of the theory is unclear in ways that invite the objection that it universalizes contingent (Western liberal) forms of life” (Varden, Section 2). Given Bhandary's commitments to pluralism and providing a cross-cultural approach, this is a serious charge. The shallow nature of LDC, paired with how Bhandary sets aside considering coercion, leads to a further worry: we may be unable to “speak to how we go about realizing the principles of her theory without thereby doing wrong,” especially if there is silence on the role that taxation might play in socially ensuring the provision of dependency care (Varden, Section 2).

Varden also argues that, in spite of its feminist roots and avowed goal of dismantling oppression, “*Freedom to Care* focuses too much attention on those who fit socially and historically prominent categories — ‘men/fathers,’ ‘women/mothers,’

and ‘children/girls/boys’ — and not enough careful attention to or incorporation of voices representing lives that are less prominent and privileged” (especially in Chapters 7 and 9) (Varden, Section 5). While Varden entirely agrees that we need to be sensitive to how boys and men relate to girls and women, she proposes that we really ought to start broader. If LDC wants to ensure just conditions where *all* can receive the required dependency care, “we should also start with all children being taught how to care about and be kind with regard to everyone” (Varden, Section 5).

Furthermore, we should “become especially aware of how many identities ... track debilitating and destructive patterns of oppression and violence” (Varden, Section 5). As it stands, little attention is paid, for example, to LGBTQIA communities. This might permit societies that exclude them from the dominant context — ultimately denying the validity of their identities — to perpetuate oppression when combining the proposed four new principles and the arrow of care map (Varden, Section 5). It is important to note, however, that Bhandary explicitly urges her fellow liberal theorists to join her in reorienting their views to be “more broadly about a range of possible arrangements and practices that are not necessarily structured as the nuclear heterosexual white upper-middle class family” (Bhandary, 2020, p. 117). Like Wolf and Edenberg, Varden raises these worries with the intent of building upon this rich theory, sharing in the optimism that LDC can and will be expanded to be even more inclusive in future iterations.

5. A Hamptonian Framing

I follow Bhandary in understanding contract theory as an attractive solution to addressing injustices surrounding care, and this is because of how appealing I find Jean Hampton’s feminist contractarian test, developed to protect against exploitation within relationships (Hampton, 2007). Hampton is discussed briefly in Chapter 4, but I believe one can feel the reverberations of her work throughout *Freedom to Care*. In this section, I briefly frame various features of LDC through a Hamptonian lens, flagging the deep feminist contractarian roots of Bhandary’s work and suggesting areas for those working in the feminist contract theory literature to explore.

For those unfamiliar with her work, Hampton’s contract test asks the crucial question: “Given the fact that we are in this relationship, could both of us reasonably accept the distribution of costs and benefits (that is, the costs and benefits that are not themselves side effects of any affective or duty-based tie between us) if it were the subject of an informed, unforced agreement in which we think of ourselves as motivated solely by self-interest?” (Hampton, 2007, p. 21). It is intended to determine whether disregard — understood as a failure to recognize inherent moral worth — is present, but it is also effective for recognizing oppression, which is rooted in disregard based on morally arbitrary group membership.

In order to apply the test, one must ask oneself whether both parties involved in the relationship can reasonably accept the way costs and benefits are distributed, provided the agreement is informed and unforced. Self-interest plays a crucial role in this question because it ensures that parties are concerned only with their own interests, and not with those affections or duties towards others; this point is directly engaged

with in Chapter 4, which takes up other-directness. But it also crops up in Chapter 2, when Bhandary rejects both Kittay's principle of *doulia* and her alternative proposal of having affectively caring individuals represented in the original position. For Hampton, the contract test questions the just distribution of those costs and benefits that are not affective, and not those that arise from the affections or duties binding the parties (also, in principle, rejecting *doulia*). For example, "... [o]ne cannot distribute the pain that a parent feels when her teenage child gets into trouble But one can distribute the burdens of caring for an infant or running a household" (Hampton, 2007, pp. 21–22). These non-affective costs and benefits must be fairly distributed, such that the relationship is not exploitative, and is instead just.

I suspect that Bhandary sets aside the affective dimension of care for precisely the same reason that Hampton does; it is an open question whether affect can be effectively quantified. If not, this would preclude its representation in the arrow of care map; I raise a concern related to this below. To flesh out what it means for a distribution to be 'reasonable,' Hampton offers the contractarian conception of the person. Given Hampton's Kantian inclinations, which she shares with Rawls, it is no surprise that her conception of the person is consistent with and supportive of Bhandary's own emphasis on the value of autonomy (Hampton, 2007, p. 22). The conception of a person has three components: (i) a list of characteristics of personhood, (ii) the normative conception of human worth, and (iii) the normative conception of a person's legitimate interests (Hampton, 2007, pp. 25–27). It is important to note that these three components are closely connected, but in the interest of space I focus solely on (iii).

Hampton does not enumerate a list of what people's legitimate interests might be. Instead, she suggests that, to determine their interests, one must look to what they as individuals with value require to be properly cared for; we must look to "... what interests of ours are urgent given our nature" (Hampton, 2007, p. 27). She suggests that, framed in an Aristotelian sense, determining our urgent interests "... involves constructing a normative theory formulating what is good for human beings (both as a species and as distinctive individuals)" (Hampton, 2007, p. 27). One might reasonably argue that Nussbaum's capabilities approach (Nussbaum, 2003, 2011) could helpfully serve as this normative theory, especially since it captures the unique features of persons, as well as informs what we take to be valuable about individuals (both of which Hampton stipulates that it must be able to do). This is, again, wholly consistent with what Bhandary proposes — in this case, regarding the value of autonomy skills (Chapter 5), where she also draws on Nussbaum.

This normative theory, in capturing our interests, informs what it would be reasonable for us to accept. Hampton leaves development of the normative theory as a task for contractarians to collectively engage in, so that they can "get philosophical control over the concept of legitimate interests to which they must appeal if their test is going to have real bite ... [and] they must not rely upon vaguely defined intuitions called forth by the contract device" (Hampton, 2007, p. 28). Bhandary understands her work as answering this call for development by stipulating dependency care as being among our legitimate interests and rejecting the historic appeal to the vaguely defined (and implicit) intuitions with which Hampton is concerned (Bhandary, 2020,

p. 84). Bhandary does this by including receipt of care among the Rawlsian basic goods, at the first level of LDC.

While I find LDC very compelling, there are two other issues regarding how effectively we make dependency care work transparent — which Bhandary's arrow of care map facilitates — that I want to suggest feminist contract theorists ought to take up. The first issue is that, without representing the presence of affection (even if not easily quantifiable) in the arrow of care map, we remain unable to recognize the exploitation of caring sentiments (McKittrick-Sweitzer, 2021). Hampton attempts to address this problem in her own view, but I believe that she also misses the mark by understanding exploitation in primarily distributive terms.³ So, the entitlements the map is supposed to highlight may not all be recognized.

The second issue is that arrow of care map represents only relationships between individuals, leaving out a crucial form of dependency care. Our continued existence is contingent upon our climate: if the environment becomes increasingly hostile, we will not survive. Additionally, our intervention is required to halt the climate crisis by protecting and restoring ecosystems. But the map, as it is currently formulated, is incapable of representing this relationship. There are, however, individuals who unfairly gain advantage from shirking their responsibilities to care for the environment while others — especially women in the world's poorest countries — bear the burdens. I'm hopeful, however, that LDC and the arrow of care map can be extended to address the ever-pressing issue of climate change. One way that this might be addressed is by further exploring the four new principles — particularly Survival Baseline — which Bhandary offers in Chapter 4.

Conclusion. I hope that the broad overview of *Freedom to Care* and this symposium's contributions — as well as the brief Hamptonian framing — have both demonstrated how Bhandary's work is novel and indicated how further engagement might broaden the influence of contemporary feminist liberal theorizing. The theory's ability to assist in understanding the pervasive injustices associated with dependency care, as well as provide concrete guidance in achieving more just circumstances, is invaluable.

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³ Bhandary does contrast her map with Hampton's view, though, by pointing to how it's focused on society-wide distributions, rather than navigating interpersonal relationships (Bhandary, 2020, p. 69).

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