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# FRANK PLUMPTON RAMSEY: A FEMINIST ECONOMIST?

SOROUSH MAROUZI

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HISTORY OF POLITICAL ECONOMY  
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# FRANK PLUMPTON RAMSEY: A FEMINIST ECONOMIST?

BY  
Soroush Marouzi\*

**Abstract:** This paper is an attempt to historicize Frank Plumpton Ramsey's Apostle talks delivered from 1923 to 1925 within the social and political context of the time. In his talks, Ramsey discusses socialism, psychoanalysis, and British women's movement. Ramsey's views on these three intellectual movements of his time were inter-connected, and they all contributed to his take on the then policy debates on the role of women in economy. Drawing on some archival materials, biographical facts, and the historiographical literature of the post-war politics of motherhood, this paper shows that the kind of feminism that explains Ramsey's remarks on women the best is the "new feminism" of the 1920s whose demands were *not* egalitarian in character.

**Keywords:** Frank P. Ramsey; Politics of Motherhood; Feminism; Psychoanalysis; Socialism.

**JEL Codes:** B14; B31; B54; I38; J31; J51

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Frank Plumpton Ramsey (1903-1930) made significant contributions to various fields in mathematics, logic, philosophy, and economics. To economists, he is mostly known for his “A Contribution to the Theory of Taxation” (1927) and “A Mathematical Theory of Saving” (1928) that contributed to the history of optimizing growth models, the public finance literature, and the theory of taxation. Ramsey was a member of the Cambridge Apostles, a secretive debating society, the membership of which included the intellectual elite of the university. In a series of talks between 1923 and 1925, Ramsey addressed many themes some of which were closely related to his famous economics articles: inter-generational justice, income inequality, and taxation (see Gaspard 2003 and 2005). But others were ranged over a wider canvas. In his last talk, he waded into the debates over feminism (and among feminists) that were active in the early interwar period: “Not merely is feminism bad for the race but it is unfortunate for the women also” (Ramsey [1925] 1992, p. 324). It would be easy to read a comment such as this as a declaration of hostility to feminism in general. However, Ramsey’s views are more complex and more nuanced. What is more, early interwar feminism in Britain itself formed a complex landscape and, surprisingly perhaps, Ramsey’s views turn out to be compatible with an important strand of feminism and in dialogue with other important intellectual currents of the day – eugenics and Freudian psychology.

Ramsey delivered four Apostle talks from 1923 to 1925; namely, “Socialism and Equality of Income” (1923), “An Imaginary Conversation with John Stuart Mill” (1924), “Sex from the Point of View of Society” (1924), and “Civilization and Happiness” (1925). The Apostles Society was an all-male secretive society at Cambridge University. Active members in the 1920s, included the philosopher and mathematical logician Bertrand Russell, the philosopher G. E. Moore, the

economist John Maynard Keynes, the biographer Lytton Strachey, and the novelist E. M. Forster. Each week an Apostle was chosen to give a talk on a subject. The subjects varied from philosophy to economics and politics. Apostle talks were informal. At times, they were written to “amuse and entertain” (Misak 2020, p. 169) and there was “a lot of showing off” in them (Misak 2020, p. 202). The nature of Apostles meetings made its mark on Ramsey’s talks, as well. Ramsey’s talks are extremely poor in reference. They contain some scattered remarks on women’s movement, psychoanalysis, and socialism. Nonetheless, the main arguments are not as crystal clear as one would expect to see in scholarly works. In any case, Ramsey’s talks are historically significant as they reveal the influence of some factors external to the Cambridge economics tradition on his economic mind. These talks preceded his later research agenda that ran through his 1927 and 1928 articles, which was to “formalize the issue of exempting savings from income taxes in a dynamic model” and was born out of his engagement with A. C. Pigou’s welfare economics (Duarte 2009, p. 446).

In his talks, Ramsey engaged with some of the heated policy debates relevant to the economic aspects of British women’s life. The outbreak of World War I or the Great War as it was then known led to a substantial increase of women in the labor market. Once the war was over, women’s role in the economy became a hot topic in public discussions. The male dominated organizations such as the Labor Party and Trade Unions argued that women ought to leave their wartime jobs and head back home, freeing up the jobs for the de-mobbed soldiers. British women’s movement largely regarded the effort to push them out of the workforce as a setback. However, they did not respond with one voice. On one hand, some feminists such as Millicent Fawcett argued for keeping women in the workforce and took the ideal of equal pay for equal work to be their objective. On the other hand, some feminists such as Eleanor Rathbone were happy to see women

coming back home. They made non-egalitarian demands, including government financial support for motherhood and recognition of the economic significance of women's domestic works, stressing women's independence rather than equality. In short, the postwar women's movement had trouble agreeing on their aims (Pedersen 1993, p. 138). The disagreements were so fundamental that one may say with Kent that "by the end of the 1920s, feminism as a distinct political and social movement no longer existed" (Kent 1988, p. 232).

Ramsey's comments on feminism in his talks to the Apostles have been subjected to contradictory readings. Margaret Paul, Ramsey's sister, has read her brother's remarks as "an attack on feminism" (2012, p. 219). Cheryl Misak, however, argues that in Ramsey's view "feminism *is* progress" (2020, p. 231; emphasis original). I argue that this interpretative controversy can be resolved by placing Ramsey's remarks in the context of the debates among British feminists themselves. The main questions are: what *kind* of feminism was Ramsey attacking? And what *kind* of feminism did he take to be the progressive one? Ramsey, I argue, objected to an egalitarian feminism that sought to minimize differences between men and women, but favored one that demanded adequate support for women and offered them financial independence. In taking this position, Ramsey aligned himself with one of the important strands of interwar feminism, while opposing a strand that seems more familiar in 21<sup>st</sup> century discussions. We must, therefore, read Ramsey in the context of these earlier debates among feminists themselves.

## **II. THE GREAT WAR AND BRITISH FEMINISM**

The Great War dislocated the sex composition of British labor market and family life. Men of the families left for warfronts and women found unusual opportunity to work in the market. Pre-war

regulations against the employment of married women in waged works softened and they were encouraged to get involved behind the scene of war. In some war factories the number of employed married women increased as high as 40-60% and the total number of employed women and girls over ten years old increased by 1.3 million (Pedersen 1993, pp. 89-91). By the end of the war, women's presence in traditionally male industries like building had increased quite significantly and their share of the total workforce nearly doubled (Pugh 1992, p. 20; and, Allen 2005, p. 113). All this meant that the dominant notion of gendered division of labor within family life had to be reconsidered. The male-breadwinner norm and the separate-sphere ideology of the prewar had it that the father is responsible for financial needs of the family and that mother's role is to take care of household works and child-rearing. But now the mother had to take over the role of breadwinner besides doing her traditional domestic tasks. This was not a smooth transition. Women's improved presence in market activities could hardly be enough to satisfy the economic needs of family life during the war. Women were paid less than men for an equal work and the war had left its mark on everyday life expenses very quickly (see Hannam and Hunt 2002, p. 145; and, Gregory 2008, p. 195). From the beginning of the war, the arguments around the social responsibility of the state with respect to the economic status of soldiers' families gathered force and the government was asked to step in.

In August 1914, Herbert Henry Asquith, the prime minister, announced that separation allowances would be soon in effect, aiming to maintain high standard of living for soldiers' families during the war. The government hoped that this policy would incentivize men to volunteer for military service, which was not compulsory in Britain at the outbreak of war (Allen 2005, p. 121). The economic scale of the allowances was massive: the government paid out almost half a billion pounds to women throughout the war, or almost as much as what was paid to the soldiers

themselves (Pedersen 1990, p 985). Meanwhile, the dominant political discourse of the time was careful enough to interpret the rationale behind the allowances as the one compatible with the male-breadwinner norm. It was argued that women are eligible recipients of the allowances because they are wives of soldiers who have put themselves at the service of the state at warfronts, not because of their own rights (see Pedersen 1990, p. 997 & 1004; and, Pedersen 1993, pp. 112-119 & p. 129). In this way, British welfare policy emerged out of the presupposition that women are dependent wives. But if separation allowances were justified on the ground that the state ought to be “a surrogate husband” during the absence of men, there was no reason for the government to continue the payments once the war was over (Pedersen 1990, p. 985). The temporary nature of separation allowances and legal facilitation for employment of women was repeatedly mentioned by policy makers, politicians and activists who did not want the male-breadwinner norm to be threatened by the wartime experience (see Pedersen 1993, pp 92-93 & p. 106). What they wanted after the war was a “normal” market with its traditional patriarchal patterns.

The post-war elimination of women from the market could not only ease the competitive atmosphere of the market in favor of men, but it could also signal that war has not changed anything. The reconstruction process of the post-war British market was accompanied by the assumption that everyone “would go quietly back to their homes, and that everything could be as it had been before” (Strachey 1928, pp. 370-371). But everything had changed. The “normalization” of market confronted resistance from a group of feminists. These feminists wanted the separation allowances to be continued after the war as they found them a successful experience that could make women free from the chain of domestic economic dependence. As early as 1916, Eleanor Rathbone wrote:



“The difference which the Separation Allowance system has made to many, the sense of security, of ease, of dignity that they are tasting for the first time in their lives, is one of the very few good things that the ill-wind of war has brought.... It will be interesting to see how these women will take it when the war is over and they are asked to go back to their old status of dependency. I confess to hoping that the seeds of “divine discontent” will have been implanted in them too deeply to be eradicated, and that we feminists will then find our opportunity” (Rathbone 1916, p. 648).

Rathbone was a leading figure of a group of feminists that attached high value to women’s economic independence and saw the continuation of separation allowances after the war as an apt way to achieve their goal. Nonetheless, another interpretation of the underlying rationale of the allowances was needed if one was to argue for its continuation and generalization for all British women in peacetime.

Rathbone pushed for an interpretative shift of the rationale of separation allowances, arguing that they ought to be understood as a “statutory payment to a woman in respect of her functions as wife and mother,” not as soldier’s wages for the services he renders for the country (Rathbone 1915, pp. 611-612). She insisted that motherhood and housekeeping ought to be counted as a career in itself entitling women to get paid for their domestic works (see Allen 2005, p. 150; Land 1990, p 111; and, Dyhouse 1989, p 102). In Maude Royden’s words, “motherhood is a service which entitles a woman to economic independence” (Royden 1917, p. 327). On this ground, Rathbone initiated a campaign for the universal scheme of family endowment. In 1917, Rathbone and some other feminists, including Maude Royden and Mary Stocks, established the Family Endowment Committee (FEC) to push for their family endowment proposal after the war.

The government took their proposal seriously and Rathbone's campaign started to gain popularity at the national level (see Pedersen 1989, p. 90). British society seemed ready for some fundamental changes in its conception of women's rights. As many as half a million of British women had experienced what it feels to be remunerated by the state in form of separation allowances during the war (Pedersen 1990, p. 991). In 1918 British women were partially enfranchised and in the following year they gained access to some unprecedented educational opportunities, thanks to British Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act. To the widespread perception of the society "the family was in crisis" (Allen 2005, p. 138), and to the feminists, time had arrived to push for their demands. Nonetheless, there was hardly an agreement over what those demands are (Kent 1988, p. 239, and Kent 1993, p. 116).

While an organized group of feminists like Rathbone, later known as "new feminism," argued for the universal scheme of family endowment, another group, called "equalitarian feminism," was worried that such endowments would incentivize women to stay at home and would thus promote the separate-sphere ideology against which pre-war suffragists had fought over the years (Pedersen 1993, p. 145)<sup>1</sup>. What the post-war equalitarian feminism wanted was equal pay for equal work, not family endowment. To these feminists, family endowments would not end women's dependence; rather, they would "replace private patriarchy with patriarchal state" (Pedersen 1993, p. 149). While in 1918 equalitarian feminists were running strikes to push for their equal pay demand (see Chassonnery-Zaigouche 2019, p. 129), new feminists were gradually gaining more and more political power and social presence. In 1919, Rathbone took over the presidency of National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC), arguably the most

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<sup>1</sup> For further details on the critical attitude of prewar British feminists toward the separate-sphere ideology see Kent (1987).

influential feminist organization of the time, and from since then she became “the principal spokeswoman for new feminism throughout the twenties” (Pedersen 1993, p. 141).

Although Rathbone valued the ideal of equal pay for equal work, she strongly believed that this demand is to be followed up only after women have achieved economic independence<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, equalitarian feminists like Millicent Fawcett thought that equal pay is an achievable objective even though women are not paid for their work at home and though they are still dependent (Pedersen 1993, p 147). In fact, both feminist camps were trying to hit the same target: the male-breadwinner norm, which was operating at its full strength in post-war Britain comparing to other European countries like France (Lewis 1992). Nonetheless, they took different paths to achieve their goal. New feminism picked the path of gendered division of labor together with state endowments in recognition of the economic value of women’s domestic works, whilst equalitarian feminism insisted on fighting for equal pay for men and women. On the whole, the path taken by the new feminism reflected its interest in pursuing the economic demands of working-class families, and the one taken by equalitarian feminism revealed its prioritization of middle-class demands over others (Pedersen 1993, p. 166; and, Kent 1993, p. 118).

The family endowment proposal came up in the annual council of NUSEC in 1919. But given the disagreement between equalitarian feminists and new feminists, it remained a controversial topic for which NUSEC could only take a stance in 1925 when it eventually committed itself to include it in its general program (Pedersen 1993, p. 149). By that time the

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<sup>2</sup> To Rathbone, the gender pay gap in the market was mainly driven by the then conventional view on family responsibilities as characterized by the male-breadwinner notion. Then, Rathbone thought, the fight for equal pay was to be preceded by the fight against the male-breadwinner norm, the route to which was through implementing the family endowment policy. For this reading of Rathbone’s stance on the equal pay demand see (Barrett and McIntosh 1980, p. 55; Dyhouse 1989, p. 102; Land 1990, p. 104; Pedersen 1993, pp. 142-144; Kent 1993, p. 119; Misra 1998, p. 382; and, Chassonnery-Zaigouche 2019, pp. 141-142).

family endowment proposal had attracted too much attention in public debates as Rathbone's *Disinherited Family: A Plea for the Endowment of the Family* (1924) was widely-read. In it, Rathbone drew on the successful experience of similar policies of family endowment in other countries and proposed a structure for its implementation in Britain. Being hopeless about the new direction of NUSEC led by Rathbone, some egalitarian-minded feminists resigned from NUSEC on March 1927 and went to organize their voice in some alternative institutions such as Open Door Council, Six Point Group, and the Women's Freedom League (see Kent 1988, pp. 240-243; Dyhouse 1989, p. 103; Pugh 1992, pp. 238-239; and, Allen 2005, p. 151). Unlike new feminists that included welfare and social reform in their program, equalitarian feminists favored labor market policies, maternity benefits, and child-care policies, remaining worried about the permeation of separate-sphere ideology in women's movement (Land 1990, p. 115; and, Misra 1998, p. 382).

As long as the practical achievements of the post-war new feminism is concerned, it contributed only to the introduction of contributory pensions for widows in 1925 and the universal scheme of endowment for motherhood turned to an economic reality only after the second world war (Pedersen 1993, p. 139). Although British women's movement was highly influential in the welfare policy formation of the inter-war period, the policies that eventually got implemented limited women's labor force participation (see Misra 1998).

### **III. THE POLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD**

The British Labor Party played a crucial role in the unfortunate fate of the family allowance campaign. The majority of male-dominated organizations stood against the new feminist demand for continuity and generalization of separation allowances in the immediate years after the war.

They were worried about the potential adverse effects of family endowments on male workers' wages (Land 1980, pp 65-68). In fact, the male-breadwinner norm, against which feminists were united, was an ideal shared by laborism, for it could keep up the bargaining power of male workers in wage negotiations on the ground that men ought to be paid an amount that would be enough for the economic needs of their family, not merely themselves (Pedersen 1989, p. 95). On this, trade unionism was with the Labor Party (see Pedersen 1993, pp. 200-203; and, Stocks 1949, p. 95), and the labor party's acceptance of the family allowance scheme was contingent on its endorsement by Trade Union Congress (TUC) (Pedersen 1993, p. 220). The Joint Research and Information Department of the Labor party and the TUC set up an Advisory Committee on Motherhood and Child Endowment in 1921. The committee's report, published in 1922, rejected the universal endowment of motherhood. The committee also suggested that the demand for endowment could be understood as the demand for improved social services, not cash allowances; a demand that the Labor Party, according to the report, was already considering in its political agenda and policy advocacy. The report was widely accepted. As a result, the Labor Party favored social services over cash allowances for families as they thought this will not bring down wages as allowances would do. Cash allowances were accepted only if the father of family was absent or dead (see Pedersen 1989, pp. 96-98; Pedersen 1993, pp. 162-163; and, Misra 1998, p. 383).

While the Labor Party was the only political party committed to universal suffrage before the war (Pedersen 1993, p. 160), the 1922 committee report made it clear that laborism and feminists had conflict of interest. Unlike the majority of left-wing followers, new feminists prioritized women's rights over men's wages. To them, "family endowment was worthwhile *regardless* of its effects on wages" (Pedersen 1993, p. 199; emphasis original). Of course, this verdict did not mean that new feminists had no economic objection to family wage. In fact, they

used the language of economic analysis besides the language of rights in showing the inadequacy of family wage. Their economic objections were shared, and in part motivated, by some research conducted by left-wing organizations which were *not* male-dominated; most notably, Fabian Women's Group (FWG) and Women's Cooperative Guild (WCG).

The family wage notion made no distinctions between bachelor men, childless couples and those men with wives and children; it was a uniform amount conceived as adequate to meet the economic needs of an average five-person family (Land 1980, p. 63; and, Pedersen 1993, p. 179). Rathbone dedicated the second chapter of her *The Disinherited Family* (1924) to an economic criticism of family wage. She found it "a sloppy and ill-thought out theory" (1924, p 136), for one, because of its insensitivity to the number of family members economically dependent on the father of family (see Rathbone 1924, pp. 14-38). This was not the first economic objection to family wage of its kind. Similar issues had been raised by the publication of *Wage-Earning Women and Their Dependents* (1915) by the FWG, cited by Rathbone (1917, p. 62) as part of her earlier economic criticism of family wage. The FWG piece contained an empirical study showing that more than half of women holding waged works had dependents for whom they were responsible for. This was an important result for it showed that the rationale behind the family wage, according to which it is men who have family members economically dependent on them, not women, is flawed (Pedersen 1989, p. 91, and Dyhouse 1989, pp. 100-101)<sup>3</sup>. Another important contribution to the family wage controversy appeared in *Round About a Pound a Week* (1913) and *Maternity: Letters from Working Women* (1915), published by the FWG and WCG, which showed that the standard of living of children and mothers were significantly lower than the male-breadwinner of

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<sup>3</sup> Established in 1908, the FWG shared the new feminist ideal of women's economic independence from their husbands (see Dyhouse 1989, p. 58). In addition, Fabian women, like new feminists, tended to bold the social function of motherhood by acknowledging the economic value of women's domestic works (see Allen 2005, p. 81).

families (Pedersen 1989, p. 94). When the FEC was established by new feminists in 1918, the socialist women of WCG endorsed the new feminist proposal for family endowments, and they reaffirmed their favorable view on this matter in their 1919 and 1920 congress reports (see Pedersen 1993, p 161)<sup>4</sup>.

As long as the economic shortcomings of the family wage was concerned, Fabian women were on board with new feminists. Nonetheless, what the majority of Fabian women wanted to have as the replacement of family wage, was not the new feminist proposal for family endowments, but the ideal of equal pay for equal work. Fabianism was a non-Marxist variation of socialism, interested in gradualism in political change, and associated with the economic orthodoxy of the London School of Economics. In 1919, Beatrice Webb, a Fabian leader, compiled the minority report for the War Cabinet Committee on Women in Industry to propose her recommendations on the gendered wage system. In it, she argued that wages must be determined by the occupational rate, and that the rates ought to be fixed by collective bargaining, insensitive to the gender, race, and creed of the worker. Webb insisted that the rejection of family wage and its underlying rationale (i.e. that men have dependents to feed, not women) would pave the way to close, and eventually eliminate, the pay gap between women and men (Gouverneur 2019b, pp 84-85). Thus, unlike WCG, Fabian women were more interested to choose the path of equalitarian feminism, not new feminism, after overcoming the hurdle of family wage norm<sup>5</sup>. On this, women of the Labor

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<sup>4</sup> In a similar spirit to the right-based arguments of new feminists that tended to overshadow the economic aspects of family endowments, women of the WCG such as Eleanor Barton were not concerned about the effects of endowments on wages (Pedersen 1993, p 201). Like new feminism, the WCG was mostly concerned with the economic status of working-class housewives (see Hannam and Hunt 2002, p. 137).

<sup>5</sup> Mabel Atkinson was another influential Fabian woman that shared Webb's ideal of equal pay and her rejection of the separate-sphere ideology. To Atkinson, what women wanted was not either work or marriage, but both (see Atkinson 1914, pp. 17-18; and, Dyhouse 1989, p. 93).

Party and TUC were on board with Fabian women, as well (Land 1980, p. 69; and, Misra 1998, p. 382).

Nonetheless, neither the economic and empirical arguments of feminists against the male-breadwinner norm, nor their right-based arguments were convincing to the proponents of family wage. Instead, feminists' resistance against the patriarchal patterns of market payments motivated its proponents to come up with new arguments to support their favorable view of family wage. In 1921, Benjamin S. Rowntree and Frank D. Stuart published *The Responsibility of Women Workers for Dependents*. In it, they carried out an empirical investigation and claimed that only around 12% of women workers have dependents. Then, they argued for different minimum wages for men and women on the ground that men have dependents to feed, not women. Their findings were surely at odds with what FWG had reported in 1915. According to Pedersen, Rowntree and Stuart's research was flawed and their conclusions were motivated by their political takes on the question of gender pay gap, not the actual data (see Pedersen 1993, pp. 156-158; and, Pedersen 1989, p. 93). The proponents of family wage were attempting to ground their arguments on "empirical findings." Some economists got also interested in the debate. Perhaps most notably, Francis Y. Edgeworth, an Oxford economist, argued that men should be paid more than women because of their family responsibilities. Edgeworth's argument was partly motivated by the empirical "findings" of Rowntree and Stuart's, which he found them more reliable than the FWG report (see Edgeworth 1922, p. 449).

Although British laborism, with the exception of those sections representing women's point of view, was standing firm against the opponents of family wage in the immediate years after the war, the Independent Labor Party (ILP) attempted to push laborism to reconsider the merits of



family endowments. In its 1926 conference, the ILP launched its campaign for “Socialism in Our Time.” The campaign was home to “radical intellectuals, activists, and young MPs” disaffected by the gradualism of Ramsay MacDonald that had led the first British labor government for nine months in 1924 (Pedersen 1993, p. 189). Redistributive family policies became central to the ILP’s program for economic recovery (Pedersen 1993, p. 179). Drawing on under-consumption theories, the ILP members argued that family endowments will increase the purchasing power of workers, that it will create additional demand for goods, and that it will eventually reduce unemployment. They also found the rationale of family endowments in line with the principles of socialism and its conception of justice (Land 1980, p. 66; and, Pedersen 1993, p. 191). The ILP went on to argue for a living wage policy, which was consist of minimum wage together with children allowances. Nonetheless, the labor party did not share the ILP’s enthusiasm for family endowments. Having considered the living wage policy, TUC and the Labor party eventually reaffirmed its position against cash allowances and favored social services to improve family lives (Land 1980, p. 65).

Rathbone believed that the adherence to family wage is not merely driven by economic motives, but also by what she notoriously called “the Turk Complex,” or men’s tendency to tame women’s freedom in family life (see Rathbone 1924, pp. 268-275). Indeed, some of the arguments posed by trade unionists against family allowances implied that the staunch proponents of family wage did not only see their wages and privileges under attack but also their very masculinity (Land 1980, p. 70). Whatever the underlying motives of the proponents of family wage, they achieved to keep the patriarchal patterns of wage system for the next few decades. Perhaps because they had more political power than feminists, or perhaps because they, not new feminists, were seen as the representative of working-class people and their demands. It was in such historical and social context that Ramsey set to deliver his Apostle talks.

#### IV. RAMSEY: THE SOCIALIST

Frank Ramsey was born to an upper middle-class Cambridge family in 1903. His father, Arthur, was a mathematics Fellow and President at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and his mother, Agnes, was educated at Oxford at a time when not many women were sent to university. Agnes co-founded the Cambridge branch of the Federation of University Women and was an active member of the pre-war suffragist movement when she held a position on the organizing committee of the Cambridge Association for Women's Suffrage. She had keen interest in left-wing politics and made the Ramseys' house a welcoming place for Labor Party gatherings and suffragist discussions. After her death, Hugh Dalton remembered Agnes as someone who played a critical positive role in the Cambridge branch of the Labor Party (Misak 2020, p. 10)<sup>6</sup>.

Frank had close relationship with his mother<sup>7</sup>. When she died, Frank said that she was the only one who really understood him (Misak 2020, pp. 282-283). Arthur once wrote that "quite early Frank began to share his mother's keen interest in politics" (quoted in Misak 2020, p. 19). Agnes also passed on her interest in taking side with the poor to Frank. As Arthur put it, Frank "inherited and imbibed from Agnes an inclination to take the side of the weak & to support the claims of the wage earner and was always on the side of liberty" (quoted in Misak 2020, p. 46).

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<sup>6</sup> Dalton was a frequent visitor of the Ramseys when Frank was at his teens (Misak 2020, p. 10), and Frank continued his relationship with Dalton during his adulthood (see Misak 2020, p. 289). Dalton joined the Fabian Society in 1907 and then became the president of the Cambridge University Fabian Society (Maccio 2016, p. 712, fn. 26), which was established in 1906 to influence middle-class opinions on politics (Takami 2014). Dalton was later appointed in the Advisory Committee of the TUC and the Labor party, mentioned in section III, that eventually rejected the family endowment proposal in 1922 (Pedersen 1993, p. 163). It is difficult to speculate to what extent the 1922 report reflected Dalton's view of the matter; but one can say that whatever his position was in 1922, a few years later, when he was contributing to the ILP's campaign for living wage, he had favorable view about family endowments, arguing that endowments would have no negative effects on wages (see Pedersen 1993, p. 199; and, Land 1980, pp. 66-67). In 1926, he called Rathbone's *Disinherited Family* (1924) as "one of the outstanding contributions to economic literature since the war" (quoted in Pedersen 1993, p. 181).

<sup>7</sup> In this section, I occasionally refer to Frank Ramsey as "Frank" to avoid the ambiguity that "Ramsey" may imply in referring to Frank's parents.

One can see the influence of Agnes on Frank's choice of readings and writings in the early 1920, shortly after he entered Cambridge University as a mathematics student at the age of seventeen. On the last page of his 1920 diary, Frank listed nearly fifty books that he had read from January to March of that year. The list included Vladimir Lenin's *The State and Revolution* (1917), Barbara Drake's *Women in the Engineering Trades* (1917)<sup>8</sup>, Alfred Marshall's *Industry and Trade* (1919), and Bruce Glasier's *The Meaning of Socialism* (1919)<sup>9</sup> (Misak 2020, p. 48). In February 1920, Ramsey wrote a few essays with strong leftist tone. The essays indicate a teenager's eagerness and curiosity in discussing history, politics, and economics<sup>10</sup>.

The wartime experience and the Agnes influence loomed large in Frank's February essays. In "The Influence of Social and Political Factors on the Course of Industrial Revolution" (ASP.1983.01: 007-02-02), written on February 29<sup>th</sup> of 1920, Frank put forward some positive remarks on the universal suffrage. It was most likely that, he thought, many "evils of the time would have been averted if parliament had been elected by universal suffrage." The prominent

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<sup>8</sup> Drake's piece was a report provided in response to an inquiry by a Joint Committee of the Labor Research Department and the Fabian Women's Group. Like Dalton, Drake was also appointed in the joint committee set up by the TUC and the Labor party in 1921 that eventually rejected family endowments and favored social services as the means to improve family life (Pedersen 1993, p. 163). The question of whether women will leave their wartime jobs once the war is over was an important one to Drake. He held that "women will not and cannot accept a verdict of the men, excluding them from a trade for which they are and know themselves to be fitted, for no other reason than sex" (1917, pp. 83-84). He also questioned the argument for family wage that was grounded on the claim that men have dependents but not women. He thought that this is not true, perhaps because of what WCG had found in 1915 (see section III). Drake mentioned that this argument is used against those feminists that seek "a solution to the problem of 'equal pay for equal work' along the line of the state endowment of the mother and child" (1917, p. 97). In his book, he also provided some statistics on women's activity in the wartime market, especially in engineering industries.

<sup>9</sup> Like Dalton, Glasier was affiliated with the ILP, and was a friend of Agnes. The first edition of his *The Meaning of Socialism* came out in 1919. In it, Glasier argued for the relevance of the structure of family life to socialism. He also listed the economic and political laws that he thought would affect the dynamics of wage system. Among them was the endowment of motherhood which was "perhaps the most important" one, for "it is the one that likely penetrate most deeply and most potently into the social structure." He then added that "if adequately accomplished this provision will liberate, almost at one stroke, not merely mothers themselves, but the family group from the most grievous anxiety and most baneful oppression of the existing wage system" (Glasier [1919] 1920, pp. 84-85).

<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, I have not been able to figure out for whom and why these essays were written. But given that they are graded and commented, my best surmise is that they were written for some assignments in Ramsey's second semester at Cambridge.

theme of the essay was the economic consequences of war and peace. Thinking that “war means dislocation of business,” Frank set to address the effects of the American war of Independence, French revolutionary war, Peninsular war, and the peace of Versailles on patterns of trade, prices, government expenditure, and employment. Perhaps most notably, Frank discussed the conditions of the labor market after the UK-France peace during Napoleonic wars in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, writing that “300,000 soldiers were discharged and swelled the already overstocked labour market” – a timely observation by a teenager with passion in economics and politics writing in the aftermath of the Great war in Britain. One can see Ramsey’s worries about the economic condition of working-class people in another essay titled “The Materialist Interpretation of History” (ASP.1983.01: 007-02-02), written on February 15<sup>th</sup> of 1920. He held that “the workers have to fight hard to maintain their standard of life and they are still looked on as animals as can be seen from the calculation of wages which will keep them alive, which are to be reduced as the cost of living falls.”

Ramsey’s February essays discussed above were not the first signs of his intellectual interest in left-wing politics. The signs became apparent as early as he was a high school boy. Ramsey entered Winchester, an academically top public school in 1915, only one year after the outbreak of war. At Winchester, Ramsey started to exchange letters with the Glasgow Communist Party and was called a “Bolshie.” He was actively engaged in public student debates, arguing for a specific brand of socialism known as Guild socialism (Misak 2020, pp. 44-45). Guild socialism was a non-Marxist variation of socialism. It was a socialist position for it shared the socialist objective of the emancipation of labor, but it was not a Marxist one for it had no interest in state ownership or collectivism. What it wanted was the control of industry by the workers themselves through the operation of guilds in the society. Guild socialism was a short-lived movement; it

initiated around 1915 and ended up with the failure of the General Strike in 1926 (Burkitt 1977, p. 8), in support of which Ramsey signed a letter (Misak 2020, p. 250).

Ramsey sharpened his notion of socialism when he became a Cambridge student. During his undergraduate years, he was surrounded by some Cambridge intellectuals with keen interest in socialism and Marxism. He soon became a close friend of Maurice Dobb who started his degree at the same time as Ramsey. Dobb joined the British Communist Party in 1920, and his debates with Ramsey and other Cambridge socialist and communist students contributed to the formation of the Cambridge University Labour Club in the same year (Misak 2020, p. 79). Ramsey hardly ever missed a meeting of the Cambridge University Socialist Society (CUSS) in his first year at Cambridge. G. D. H. Cole, an intellectual leader of guild socialism, gave a talk at Cambridge during Ramsey's first year. Ramsey found the speech "great" and spent some time with Cole after his speech (Misak 2020, p. 86). Nonetheless, in a paper titled "Mr. Cole's Social Theory" (ASP.1983.01: 006-07-09), delivered to CUSS by the end of his first year at Cambridge, one can see the first signs of his skepticism about the merits of guild socialism<sup>11</sup>. Most of Ramsey's critical examination of Cole was centered around the ethical basis of Cole's social philosophy, not its economic analysis. Adopting G. E. Moore's account of goodness as something simple, unanalyzable, and to be perceived by intuition, Ramsey argued that Cole has committed some fallacious ethical arguments originating in his flawed conception of the will theory of right and

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<sup>11</sup> Ramsey's critical view of guild socialism was later accompanied by his critical mathematical piece on Major C. H. Douglas' A+B theorem, according to which the purchasing power of individuals was not in harmony with the price mechanism and so there ought to be some form of credits distributed among individuals to fill the gap between wages and total value of goods and services produced. For a sustained account of the tight connection between Douglas' social credit movement and guild socialism see Burkitt (1997) and for an overview of Ramsey's criticism of Douglas see Misak (2020, pp. 121-127).

what amounts to goodness. He also objected to the “individualist theory of Cole” for its attempt to reduce the values of the state or society to the values of their members<sup>12</sup>.

As Misak (2020) suggests, it is difficult to classify Ramsey as a proponent of a particular political party, however, by the time that he was set to deliver his Apostle talks on the politics of motherhood, he had definitely turned his back to guild socialism and had become more interested in state-ownership and welfare policies. In “Socialism and Equality of Income” (1923), he defended the state ownership and control of industry in explicit terms on the ground that it has positive consequences for both patterns of production and distribution of income (see e.g. Ramsey [1923] 1992, pp. 316-317). Nonetheless, we shall see that Ramsey’s stance on the politics of motherhood can be hardly interpreted as something typical of a socialist. His personal experience at Cambridge as an Apostle was another important factor shaping his view of women’s rights and their role in the economy.

## **V. RAMSEY: THE APOSTLE**

We have seen that Agnes successfully passed on her interest in politics to Frank. Nonetheless, she was much less successful to do so when it came to the matters of sex. Frank had fundamental disagreement with her mother over sexual morality (Misak 2020, p. 11). When in 1925 Frank and Lettice C. Baker were married, they mutually agreed not to limit each other’s sexual life. Frank knew that Agnes would not be happy about their decision and so he did his best to keep the matter secret from her mother (see Misak 2020, pp. 205-215). Both Frank and Lettice occasionally satisfied their sexual interests outside of the marriage bond and they were open about it with each

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<sup>12</sup> Keynes had also followed up Moore in adopting a similar non-reductionist notion in his “On the Principle of Organic Unities” which he read to the Apostles in 1910 (see Maccio 2016, p. 710; and, Davis 1989). Appealing to Moore’s view of ethics in economic analysis was a theme shared by Apostle economists (Maccio 2016).

other and their close friends in Cambridge and London (see Misak 2020, pp. 246-255). Indeed, Frank and Lettice were not unique in Cambridge of the 1920s. They were surrounded by intellectuals who advocated free love. Frank was a frequent attendee of both the Apostles and the Bloomsbury meetings. The former was an all-men secretive intellectual society that saw Russell and Moore among its members, and the latter was mostly home to writers and artists such as Duncan Grant. Some like Keynes, Ramsey, and Lytton Strachey were active in both circles. By and large, Apostles and Bloomsburians were in agreement when it came to matters of sex. As Desmond Bernal once put it, free love had become “the new religion” in Cambridge (Misak 2020, p. 148)<sup>13</sup>.

Ramsey’s disinterest in monogamy first appeared in one of his 1920 essays titled “the Materialist interpretation of History,” discussed in last section. In it, he brings a quotation from Edward Jenks, sympathizing with his explanation of the alleged underlying rationale of monogamy. The quotation has it that “permanent marriage” has been motivated by “*the desire of the man to secure for himself exclusively the labour of the woman and her offspring*” (Jenks 1900, p. 27; emphasis original). It is true that the post-war Cambridge was home to a significant number of intellectuals with passion for free love, but this passion was a local phenomenon, peculiar to Bohemian elitism. The older generation like Agnes surely never shared the enthusiasm of Bloomsburians and alike for free love. Beatrice Webb was concerned with socialist support for free love and Fawcett believed in the merits of traditional family life (Zaigouche 2019, p. 138). In any case, free love could have important consequences on the social and economic patterns. In “Sex from the Point of View of Society” (1924), Ramsey asked his fellow Apostles to take the consequences of their actions seriously:

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<sup>13</sup> For further details on Ramsey’s bond with Bloomsburians, see Misak (2020, pp. 147-150). See also Misak (2020, p. 213 & pp. 246-249) for more details on the Bloomsburian notion of free love and its relevance to Ramsey’s lifestyle.

“It seems to-day as if the old ideas were collapsing as the religion from which they derive is giving way to vaguer religions, more dissociated from conduct and less definite about morality, and I think we ought to consider whether this movement is a good one, and if so, what, if anything, we should attempt to substitute for the old morality” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 325).

Those “vaguer religions” would decay the “moral feelings about monogamy” and would imply that marriage is not to be regarded “as a long arrangement” anymore (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 327). One can imagine that Ramsey was not only talking to the Apostles, but to himself, as well. He was himself a believer in that new vague religion of Cambridge elitism as his non-monogamous marriage with Lettice implies. In any case, Ramsey took the collapse of the traditional institution of marriage as something given in his analysis of the post-war economic status of women (see also Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 327; fn. 10). Not a realistic assumption about British society as a whole, but an apt one as long as one’s audience was the Apostles.

To Ramsey, abandoning traditional moral codes would have serious consequences on “maintenance of women and children” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 327). If traditional marriage is gradually disappearing for a certain class of society, then it implies that the norms associated with traditional marriage would become ineffective. One of those norms, and perhaps the most important one from an economic perspective of family life, was the male-breadwinner norm. Ramsey writes:

“the institution of marriage with its concomitant morality is defended, I suppose, mainly by urging the interests of women and children, and it is regarded as securing to the majority of women maintenance for themselves and their children, in as much as for a respectable



woman to give herself to a man without exacting these terms is held to be wicked and so made almost impossible” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 325).

Ramsey then makes a curious comparison between the function of a trade union with the traditional institution of marriage operating under the male-breadwinner norm, which leads him to conceptualize the dynamics of marriage institution in economic terms – an unusual analysis of marriage institution by that time. He says that “the institution [of marriage] resembles in some ways trade union action; except prostitutes are exempted from the union regulations because they supply an inferior article and are not regarded as serious competitors” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, pp 325-326). “Like other forms of trade unionism,” Ramsey continues, “the marriage system obviously secures better terms for women than they would obtain under free competition, but at the cost of a serious amount of unemployment because marriage is made expensive to men” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 326). One should note that Ramsey’s view ought *not* to be interpreted as an approving remark on the family wage norm. In fact, Rathbone and other feminists would agree with Ramsey that the women’s share of the family wage is on whole higher than what they would be paid in a free market, for the gender bias was institutionalized in the wage system of market. As the following passage indicates, among three types of views about the family wage controversy discussed in section II; namely, that of the left-wing male-dominated organizations, that of equalitarian feminism, and that of new feminism, the latter does the best at describing Ramsey’s position. In “Socialism and Equality of Income” (1923), Ramsey acknowledges the economic merits of family endowments as follows:

“There is the question whether the cost of a family should be born by the father or the State.

On the one hand it seems reasonable that those enjoy the pleasure of having children should

bear the cost for it themselves; but on the other hand the principle of making the national income go as far as possible makes reasonable leads towards the maintenance of the children by the State. Evidently the misery of poverty would today be considerably alleviated if incomes were proportioned to the size of the family; and this plan is in fact adopted in poor relief and government pensions and separation allowances” (Ramsey [1923] 1991, p. 318).

In his “Sex from the Point of View of Society” (1924), Ramsey mentions an argument against family endowments according to which “it is unjust that those persons who do not have the pleasure of having children themselves should be forced to contribute to the maintenance of other people’s children” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, pp. 327-328). He then responds:

“If now we try to imagine a state in which people are no longer under the influence of present day moral ideas, I think we shall find the chief difficulty to be the maintenance of women and children; and I cannot see any method of avoiding the view that if such a state wanted children to be reproduced it would have to undertake their maintenance” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 327).

Note the conditional nature of Ramsey’s argument. As mentioned earlier, Ramsey takes the collapse of marriage institution as something given in his analysis and this makes it easier for him to see the merits of family endowments over the family wage norm which becomes ineffective once traditional marriage would disappear. It is also important to note that Ramsey’s positive remarks on family endowments were not limited to its economic aspects. He also acknowledges an important side-product of this policy; that is, the economic freedom of women - what new feminists took as their ideal:

“[S]uch a state [that implements the family endowment policy], it seems to me, might well be more attractive to women than the present one; it would give them much more independence in their relations with men. By marriage a woman loses much of her independence; among the lower classes, anyhow; she loses the advantage of having her own money, a loss which is supposed sufficient to make many married women go out to work in order to obtain pocket money of their own. If women were paid by the state for having children, and for housekeeping and so on by the man they lived with they would be in much more independent position” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 328)

One can imagine such statements to come out of Rathbone’s pen with an important difference that Ramsey’s positive view on family endowments was, at least in part, motivated by his observation of the Bohemian attitude to sexual life. Nonetheless, there was another important incentive constitutive to Ramsey’s stance on the politics of motherhood; namely, his interest in Freud.

## **VI. RAMSEY’S MATERNALISM**

In 1923, Ramsey found a passion for a married woman, a decade older than his age. She was Margaret Pyke, an Oxford educated and a Bloomsburian. Ramsey’s repeated attempts at drawing Margaret’s attention to his feelings turned out to be fruitless. They never got close in the way Ramsey wanted them to be. Ramsey became hopeless and he soon found himself emotional, sleepless, and anxious in sexual life. In 1924, he decided to spend six months in Vienna to be psychoanalyzed by Theodor Reik, the writer of the first PhD dissertation on psychoanalysis (Misak 2020, 150-170). Although skeptical about the merits of the process at the beginning, Ramsey eventually declared himself as cured (Misak 2020, p. 176-177). After his return to Cambridge, Ramsey followed up his interest in Freud by engaging himself with a Cambridge group named

“Psych An Society.” Ramsey was among its formative members, along with Lytton Strachey and the mathematical statistician Harold Jeffreys. All of the group members had been psychoanalyzed themselves. They met on Sunday nights - Saturday nights were reserved for the Apostles meetings. The first meeting of Psych An Society was held on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1925 and the group petered out after a year (Misak 2020, pp. 220-222; and, Forrester and Cameron 2017, chap. 6).

Ramsey’s interest in psychoanalysis manifested itself in his 1924 and 1925 Apostle talks. In “An Imaginary Conversation with John Stuart Mill,” read on January 26<sup>th</sup>, 1924, Ramsey imagined a dialogue centered around Mill’s mental break-down at the early age of twenty, and how he eventually emancipated himself from the tight grip of depression. This was before Ramsey was analyzed and it was when his mood was still down. In this talk, Ramsey supports Freudian psychoanalysis as an advanced psychological theory that reveals how simplistic Mill’s utilitarianism is.

Ramsey delivered his “Civilization and Happiness” (1925) on November 1925, when he was still attending the Sunday meetings of Psych An Society. In this last Apostle talk of his, Ramsey conceived of civilization as a “burden.” He thought that this burden “has lately been and is still enormously increasing in the case of the female sex,” an observation that leads him “to a general consideration of feminism” (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 322). In Ramsey’s view, civilization and happiness were not compatible; the former progresses at the cost of the latter. He elaborates his point by employing the Freudian concepts of repression and sublimation<sup>14</sup>. In effect, Ramsey argued that the pleasure gained from the unconscious employment of sublimation (that drives intellectual inquiries) is lower than the pleasure gained by direct satisfaction of sexual desires (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 321). In his view, the prospering of the British economy had been the

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<sup>14</sup> As Forrester (2004) put it, Ramsey’s view was akin to what later appeared in Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930).

consequence of the unconscious employment of sublimation and repression of British men's sexual desires. Analyzing the effects of this process on British society, he held that Englishmen's relations with men have been "more important to them than their relations with women" (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 322). "Colleges' feasts and city dinners," he continued, "are typically English homosexual functions" (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 323) - such was a young Cambridge man's worries talking in front of the Apostles who were known for their pursuit of brotherly love (Taddeo 1997). The unconventional attitudes of Englishmen, Ramsey thought, have incentivized Englishwomen to find a solution for this problematic aspect of their everyday life. Their solution, however, was not a good one to Ramsey:

"Women have long wanted a better position, and are seeking education and emancipation generally. They are trying to imitate or rival men in vocations for which they are on the average less fitted by nature, and though this rivalry and education becoming less feminine and less capable of feminine happiness. The point seems to me to be that they are not trying to raise the position of the female sex, by making themselves more important to men in a feminine way, so that men's lives revolved round women. This they could hardly manage; so that they are naturally trying to better themselves by the alternative method of becoming as far as possible men instead of women" (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 323).

Ramsey warns women not to "imitate" men and not to masculinize their very "nature." Ramsey's commitment to the separate-sphere ideology is evident in the passage above and it seems to be driven by the Freudian view that was insisting on the biological differences between men and women. According to Kent (1990), it was the very implication of Freud's "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" ([1925] 1927) that women's life-

long dissatisfaction caused by penis envy could be overcome by child-rearing and motherhood. It would not be a far speculation to say that Freud's 1925 article was the matter at debate in the 1925 Psych An Society meetings that saw Ramsey as an active member<sup>15</sup>. In any case, Freud's 1925 article aside, Ramsey was certainly well-aware of Freud's theory of sexual development and its implication for what constitutes gender through his acquaintance with Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905)<sup>16</sup>. Then, two options seem to be open for interpretation of Ramsey's remarks above: first, Ramsey ought to be understood as a representative of an antifeminist Cambridge intellectual whose account of gendered division of labor was inspired by his interest in psychoanalysis; and, second, Ramsey ought to be understood as a representative of a new feminist of his time and that his interest in the separate sphere-ideology was inspired by his joint interest in new feminism and psychoanalysis. I shall argue for the latter interpretation. As Kent (1988, 1990, and 1993) suggests, new feminism and psychoanalysis had tight connection in the aftermath of the Great War. Although both interpretations are underdetermined by the piece of textual evidence above, Ramsey's positive remarks on family endowment and women's economic independence in his other Apostle talks (see sections IV and V) add more credibility to the latter interpretation.

Although prewar feminists understood masculinity and femininity as cultural products and not biologically determined concepts (Kent 1988, p. 233; and, Allen 2005, p. 188), new feminists embraced "the primacy of sexual difference in determining the relations between men and women"

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<sup>15</sup> Although James Strachey's translation of Freud's 1925 article into English appeared in the *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis* in 1927, Ramsey could have read the original version of the article in German right after its publication in 1925, for he had shown his advanced skills in German language when translating Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* (1922) into English. After all, Paul's remarks support this conjecture. After quoting some passages of his brother's 'Civilization and Happiness' (1925), Paul writes that "it seems likely that Frank had read the then recent paper by Freud on the subject of women" (Paul 2012, 220). In a footnote, she clarifies what paper of Freud she has in mind: "'Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes'; first read at the Homberg International Psychoanalytical Congress, 3 September 1925" (Paul 2012, 289, fn. 7).

<sup>16</sup> Ramsey's careful and lengthy notes on Freud (1905) can be found in Ramsey's notes titled 'Psychoanalysis' (ASP.1983.01: 003-01-01).

(Kent 1990, p. 71). To Rathbone, there was “scarcely a department of human activity in which the physiological differences between men and women and the ensuing differences in their activities have not some effect, though in many departments it may be only slight, upon the outlook of the two sexes” (1927, p. 3)<sup>17</sup>. The changing conception of what constitutes gender (from a cultural account to a biological one) that manifested itself in the post-war new feminist writings was driven by the then psychoanalytic and sexological literature (Kent 1990, p. 67; and, 1993, p. 125). In November 1925, about the time Ramsey delivered his last Apostle talk, Ray Strachey, an equalitarian feminist, observed that “the latest craze, apparently, is to discuss the ‘essential’ differences of men and women, and to call in all the new psycho-analytical vocabulary for the purpose of saying the same old things [on the separate-sphere ideology] in a new form [of new feminism]” (quoted in Kent 1993, p. 134). In Freudian psychoanalysis, “happiness and health for women... depended upon motherhood” (Kent 1990, p. 73). Likewise, Ramsey held that women had “fundamental instincts for marriage and motherhood” (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 323). In Jeffreys’ words, “the ideal of sexually fulfilling motherhood... had by the 1920s been absorbed into the ‘new feminism’ of Eleanor Rathbone and other women in the National Union for Equal Citizenship” (1997, p. 146). It was this new feminist biologically-based account of gender equality that made them look like pre-war anti-feminists to the eyes of egalitarian-minded feminists (Kent 1993, pp. 117-121).

In her 1925 NUSEC presidential address, only about eight months before the time that Ramsey expressed his worries about those women attempting to masculinize their “nature,” Rathbone had put forward striking similar remarks to Ramsey’s. In her speech, Rathbone rejected

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<sup>17</sup> For further textual evidence on the new feminists’ insistence on the biological differences between men and women see Rathbone (1917, p. 59) and Pederson (1989, p. 91).

the orthodox equalitarianism associated with what she called “the old feminism.” The time had arrived, she thought, for the emergence of “the new feminism” with its new account of gender equality:

“At last we can stop looking at our problems through men's eyes and discussing them in men's phraseology. We can demand what we want for women, not because it is what men have got, but because it is what women need to fulfill the potentialities of their own natures and to adjust themselves to the circumstances of their own lives” (Rathbone 1925, p. 52).

It seems not a far historical speculation to say that Ramsey was consciously following up his interests in psychoanalysis and new feminism in tandem. He had seen the conceptual commonalities between Freud's theory of sexual development and the new feminist account of gender equality that underpinned their positive view on the gendered division of labor. Post-war new feminism and Freudian psychoanalysis were each other's ally, and Ramsey's maternalism was the resultant of his joint interest in these two influential intellectual movements. Taking account for such contextual matters may help us to interpret Ramsey's controversial remarks on feminism in an apt way. In his 1925 Apostle talk, he put forward explicit critical remarks on what he takes to be “feminism.” He writes:

“Not merely is feminism bad for the race but it is unfortunate for the women also, who are forced away from the kind of life which they are fitted by nature to enjoy, to one which can only give them secondary satisfaction” (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 324).



The passage above is not as straightforward as it seems. There are two subtle points that need to be explained: Ramsey's usage of the term "feminism" and his eugenic criticism of it. I shall address these two points in turn.

According to Ramsey, the feminism that he has in mind forces women away from doing what they are fitted to by nature. It is motherhood and domestic works that fit women's nature, not working in the outside sphere. Thus, the feminism that Ramsey is referring to must be the one that encourages women to work outside, not the one that was advocating maternalism together with family endowments. That is, the term "feminism" above ought to be understood as "equalitarian feminism," not the "new feminism" of Rathbone. One should note that "new feminism" and "equalitarian feminism" were not common words in the political discourse by the time Ramsey was delivering his Apostle talks. Rathbone introduced her position as "new feminism" in her 1925 NUSEC presidential address only about eight months before Ramsey's talk on "Civilization and Happiness." But the difference between the two branches of feminism became more explicit and widely identifiable only after the institutional split within British women's movement on March 1927 (see section II); that is, by the time that equalitarian feminists resigned from NUSEC that was being led by Rathbone "to oppose what they considered a dangerous emphasis on gender difference at the expense of equality" (Allen 2005, p. 141). Ramsey was not alone in using "feminism" to refer to the position held by the egalitarian-minded feminists of his time. Freud used the term in the same way when wrote on "the denials of feminists, who are anxious to force us to regard the two sexes as completely equal in position and worth" ([1925] 1927, p. 142). In 1920, Karl Abraham described feminists as those who mistakenly "consider that the sex of a person has nothing to do with his or her capacities, especially in the mental field" (quoted in Kent 1990, p. 74). Likewise, Ernest Jones, Ramsey's fellow member of Psych and Society, used "feminism" to

refer to those denying the “differences between the sexes” (Forrester 2017, p. 179, fn. 228). Thus, it seems that what was later known as new feminism was excluded from Ramsey’s harsh criticism of “feminism” mentioned above, for they themselves drew upon the works of such psychoanalysts to justify their maternalism, which they saw complementary to their family endowment campaign. Paul (2012) is right in saying that Ramsey’s talk was “an attack on feminism” (p. 219), but it would be more accurate to say that it was an attack on equilitarian feminism.

We have seen that Ramsey held that (equalitarian) feminism is bad “for the race.” Right after his negative remarks on those women trying to imitate men (quoted above), he reiterates his eugenic concern about the egalitarian demands of women’s movement:

“This process must I think have the unfortunate consequence of weakening the race. On the whole, the more intelligent women will be educated, and of educated women a relatively small proportion marry, and those who do tend to have fewer children than others” (Ramsey [1925] 1991, p. 323).

It was not only the egalitarian demands of feminists that could attract eugenic considerations. The new feminist campaign for family endowment was also dealing with similar types of criticism. Although their maternalism seemed fine in view of eugenicists, their family endowment policy could have increased the lower-class population and was a matter of concern for whoever was worried about the effects of such policy on the quantity and quality of population. But, Ramsey thought, there is a solution out of the negative eugenic effects of family endowments. In “Socialism and Equality of Income” (1923), after putting some positive remarks on “the maintenance of the children by the State,” he writes:

“The chief objection to it [family endowment] to-day is that it would probably tend to increase the population; but whether that objection will maintain its force when people know about birth control and are educated enough to practice it seems to me very doubtful” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, pp. 318-319).

Ramsey put forward similar remarks in “Sex from the Point of View of Society” (1924). In it, he discusses a couple of objections to family endowments, the first of which is: “with the birth rate as high as it is it would be wrong to offer financial inducements which might raise it still higher.” Nonetheless, Ramsey reiterates that there is a remedy for such negative effects of family endowments: spreading the knowledge of contraception methods (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 327).

New feminists were fully aware that an important obstacle against their campaign for endowment of motherhood was the eugenic objections to their economic plan. Rathbone had addressed the matter in chapter six of her book where she discussed and undermined “The Fear of Over-population or Mal-population” regarding family endowments (1924, pp. 232-247). She held that eugenic considerations ought to be at play once working out the details of the preferred form of family endowments: “if there is reason to suppose that a certain form of provision would influence the birth-rate in a way that is undesirable from a eugenic or economic or moral point of view, that is a reason for changing the form; not necessarily for abandoning the provision” (1924, p. 232). One solution was the one that Ramsey had in mind; that is, trying to convince the government to provide birth control information and contraceptive methods to married women, which could be seen as a complementary plan to the family endowment campaign. In fact, by 1925, Rathbone had “two new reforms” in mind that “she wished to be included in the NUSEC immediate programme: birth control and family allowances” (Smith 1990, p. 56). By 1925, the new feminists succeeded to include the birth control advocacy in the NUSEC agenda. Shortly after,

they lobbied the Ministry of Health with the help of the women of the Labor Party, which resulted in allowing the provision of birth control information at public clinics. Thus, on advocating birth control information and the accessibility of contraceptive methods, Ramsey followed up new feminists, and the women of the Labor Party, not the men of the Labor Party that were standing against this policy (see Smith 1990, pp. 56-57; Kent 1993, p. 131-132; Hoggart 2000, p. 105; and, Allen 2005, pp 164-165)<sup>18</sup>.

The eugenic aspect of family endowments drew the attention of economists, as well. Edgeworth considered women responsible for both family life and the future of human race (Chassonery-Zaigouche and Cot, forthcoming). He held that “the increase of population might be welcomed if it consisted of the higher types,” however, he thought, family endowments would not result in “the improvement of the race” for it increases the quantity of “the least desirable classes” (1922, p. 454; see also 1924, p. 448).

Cambridge Welfare economics tradition had also a history of eugenic considerations as part of its economic analysis of welfare policies. Marshall’s maternalism had tight bond with his eugenic view. Like Edgeworth, Marshall had found women responsible for the improvement of race and the efficiency of the future generations of market labor-force. Once observing that “the

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<sup>18</sup> In addition to the birth control advocacy, Ramsey gave two more hints at how the negative eugenic effects of family endowments could be avoided. First, he held that “the danger that women would have too many children to get the money for them could, I think, be averted by reducing enormously the payment for any children after the first few” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 328). On this, Ramsey’s view was essentially the same as what Rathbone had called the “downward graded” system for family endowments (see Rathbone 1924, pp. 289-290). Second, Ramsey thought that family endowments, unlike family wage, ought not to be paid in a universal flat rate, “for if we were to pay a flat rate, so much for the first child, so much for the second child, and so on we could not afford enough to attract *the best kind of woman*” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, p. 328; emphasis added). Instead of a flat rate, Ramsey argued, there ought to be some opportunity cost considerations to determine the optimum rate for each woman: “the amount a woman is to be paid to bear and rear a child must, it would seem, depend on her social standing or perhaps on the amount she could have earned by adopting some profession other than that of motherhood” (Ramsey [1924] 1991, pp. 327-328).

wages of women are... rising fast relatively to those of men's", Marshall became worried that this may prompt women "to neglect their *duty* of building up a true home, and of investing their efforts in the personal capital of their children's character and abilities" (Marshall [1920] 2013, p. 570; emphasis added). Marshall's maternalism and eugenic concerns led him to argue for a gender-specific minimum wage with a family wage for men and a subsistence wage for women (see Bankovsky 2019, pp. 261-262). In addition, he held favorable view of the Factory Acts which were to restrict women's access to waged works (see Pujol 1992, chap. 8, and Gouverneur 2019a). He also objected to the policies like Old Poor Law and New Poor Law on the ground that they increase the birth rate within the working-class (Bankovsky 2019).

Like Marshall, Pigou was a pro-separate-sphere ideology. "There can be no doubt that," Pigou thought, "the work done by women in factories" will bring about "grave injury to the health of their children" (Pigou 1920, pp. 162-163). Hence, his advocacy for the government intervention to reduce the working hours of married women (Aslanbeigui 1997, p. 309). Pigou put forward his solution to avoid what he took as the negative eugenic consequences of endowments in his response to Sidney Webb's view of the matter. In "the Decline in the Birth Rate" (1907, pp. 18-19), Webb held that some working-class families are prudent and some are not. To him, the former group, on the whole, had more desirable characteristics than the latter. A policy like endowment of motherhood, Webb thought, could increase the proportion of former prudent working-class families to the total working-class population and so would have positive effects on the patterns of population growth. In response, Pigou (1907, p. 369) argued that negative eugenic policy like sterilization of the worst group of the working class people is a better option than the positive eugenic policy of stimulating the population growth of the better group of working-class people, for one ought to consider the effect of the policy on the proportion of the whole working-class

population to the total population of the society. Negative eugenic measures would decrease this proportion, but positive measures would increase them. In any case, after the war, the Webbs swayed toward the strategy of occupational rate as the determinant of wages and did not get on board with Rathbone and her campaign for endowment of family.

Ramsey never advocated a negative eugenic measure like fertilization with Pigou. As mentioned above, he thought providing birth control information and the accessibility of contraceptive methods would be enough as a complementary policy to family endowments. Nonetheless, Ramsey's style of engagement with the family endowment controversy was akin to what could be found in the Cambridge welfare tradition. He was sensitive to the eugenic aspects of family endowments. He was a pro-maternalist and was committed to a gendered division of labor. Nonetheless, his policy debates were not merely driven by what he had learned as a Cambridge economist. He had wide intellectual interests in the politics of motherhood and Freudian psychoanalysis and his position on the role of women in economy ought to be understood within the political and intellectual context of the time that went beyond Cambridge welfare tradition.

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