

# The New Economic Visionaries



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## **Riane Eisler: The Caring Economy**

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### **Her Vision**

I see a world guided by a “caring economics” where the main investment is in caring for people and nature. In this world, the value of caring work is taught starting in childhood. Schools teach boys and girls how to care for self, others, and nature. Training for childcare, primary school teaching, and other caring professions are top priorities, and these jobs are highly respected and well paid. Parenting education is equally prioritized.

Childcare in families is supported by caregiver tax-credits, stipends, paid parental leave, and social security credit for the first seven years of a child’s life—whether the caregiver is a woman or a man. Workplaces provide flex-time, job-sharing, and other partnership inventions. As the value of caregiving is more recognized, men do more of it, and women and men participate equally in the formal labor force and have the same opportunities and responsibilities at home. As the general quality of human capital rises, more capable, skilled, and caring workers contribute to a more productive economy. This in turn makes more funding available for government and business policies that support caring and caregiving. And all this enhances the quality of life for all.

Care for the elderly is facilitated by adequate monetary pensions, including pensions for caregivers. Poverty and hunger are effectively addressed because women, who are now the mass of the world’s poor, are rewarded for caregiving.

Businesses recognize that employees who feel cared for are more productive and that customers who feel cared for are more loyal. Companies are rewarded with tax breaks and other benefits for caring practices.

As caring is more valued, women have greater respect and authority. Women become half of the national legislatures and are often heads of governments, ushering in real representative democracy. As material, emotional, and spiritual needs are increasingly met, crime, terrorism, and warfare decrease. Exponential population growth is halted as women have reproductive freedom, education, and equal rights. Gaps between haves and have-nots shrink as people are no longer driven to amass enormous wealth as substitutes for meeting our yearnings for caring connection, fairness, and meaning. And spirituality is no longer focused on an afterlife, but on building a world where the wonder and beauty latent in every child can be realized right here on Earth.

### **How We Get There**

The main obstacle isn't economic; it's cultural. Today, the value of women's unpaid work is estimated at \$11 trillion per year. And, in the US, people pay plumbers—the people to whom we entrust our pipes—\$50-100 per hour. But childcare workers—the people to whom we entrust our children—are paid an average of \$10 an hour. We've inherited an economic double standard that devalues everything stereotypically associated with women and the “feminine”—whether in women or men. This directly affects economic measurements, policies, and practices.

Rather than trying to patch up a system that isn't working, let's use our present economic crisis to work for a system that meets human needs. Making these changes won't be easy. But every one of us can set in motion ripples that culminate in a caring revolution that transforms our lives and our world.

Here's what you can do to make a difference:

- Voting for leaders that back caring values.
- Running for office yourself on a caring economic platform.
- Demanding more caring values from those already in office.
- Proposing that standards for caring policies and behaviors are included in corporate charters—and that conformity to these standards be required for membership in chambers of commerce and other business associations.
- Buying from companies that have caring employee, consumer, and environmental policies.
- Supporting and participating in movements to raise the status of women worldwide.
- Changing the conversation about economics to include the word “caring.”

Every one of us can talk about “caring economics” at home, at work, at parties, at meetings, in schools and universities, and in public spaces. In these ways, ripple by ripple, we can together build momentum for a real cultural transformation—a caring revolution not only in economics, but in all aspects of our lives.

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*Dr. Riane Eisler is a social scientist, cultural historian, evolutionary theorist, and one of the world’s great thinkers. Her newest book, The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics, has been hailed by world leaders from Archbishop Desmond Tutu to Jane Goodall.*