**Foundations for an Equitable and Sustainable New Normal**

**Opening Keynote**

**AI for Good Conference**

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Thank you Amir and all the others for organizing this important conference and for inviting me to give this stage-setting keynote. As you know, I am going to talk to you about “Foundations for an Equitable and Sustainable New Normal” and about what we can do to build it at this time of rapid technological and social change, including the rapid development and implementation of AI.

It is a great pleasure for me to be with you, especially since the title of this conference, “AI for Good,” recognizes that how AI, like other technological breakthroughs, is developed and applied primarily hinges on our guiding values, which in turn are embedded in our cultural, social, and economic system.

I. I want to start with where we are, with the Covid 19 Pandemic, because this pandemic we are living through has demonstrated the fragility, the lack of resilience, not to speak of the inequities and inequalities, of our present cultural, social, and economic systems. So even though we hear much today about getting back to normal, I am going to suggest to you that actually we do *not* really want to return to the old “normal” – a normal where even before this pandemic, one quarter of all children in the wealthy United States lived in poverty, and billions worldwide lived in poverty, not to speak of the fact that we have been literally destroying our natural life support systems.

Clearly we need a better new normal, a new normal I call *partnerism*.

I know that partnerism is probably a new term for some of you. But as Einstein said, we cannot solve problems with the same thinking that created them. We need new thinking. As those of you familiar with my work, with books such as *The Chalice and the Blade,* which is now by the way in its 57th US printing and 37 foreign editions, and to fast forward to my most recent book, which came out a few months ago with Oxford University Press, *Nurturing Our Humanity*, as you know, my work has been dedicated to new thinking, especially to how we can bring about a more just and caring world, a world in which AI and other technological breakthroughs like biotechnology and nanotechnology will actually be used for good.

So I am going to ask you to step out of your comfort zones and take a fresh look at the old social and economic categories that are part of our old normal. Because, if you really think about these conventional categories we have been taught, there have been repressive, violent, unjust societies in every one of them – whether they are religious or secular, rightist or leftist, socialist or capitalist, Eastern or Western, and so on. So none of them tell us what we need to create a better world. Not only that, and this is critical, these conventional categories marginalize, or even leave out, the majority of humanity: women and children.

So what I introduced, starting with *The Chalice and the Blade*, is a new more inclusive and holistic way of looking at socio-economic systems, because that’s what we need to create a better world, a world in which technological advances are really used for good: the new lens for looking at social systems of the partnership-domination social scale. And a major part of this system is an economics that in my book *The Real Wealth of Nations* I call partnerism, which, I want to add, is the impetus for what is today the growing partnerism movement to accelerate the forward movement toward partnership.

II. We have a lot to cover. But I want to start on a personal note, because my passion for this work is deeply rooted in my own childhood life experiences...I was born in Europe at a time of massive regression to the domination side of the partnership-domination social scale: the rise of the Nazis, first in Germany and then in my native Austria. So from one day to the next, my parents and I became hunted with license to kill. I was a little girl and watched with horror as a gang of Gestapo men broke into our home and dragged my father away, and it was only by a miracle that my mother obtained his release and we escaped by hair’s breadth to Cuba, where I grew up in the industrial slums of Havana, because the Nazis confiscated everything my parents owned. And there I experienced yet another injustice, the terrible poverty, the enormous gaps between haves and have-nots at that time in Cuba. And it was also there that I learned that most of my family, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, were murdered by the Nazis in the Holocaust – as would have happened to my parents and me had we not by a miracle escaped.

These traumatic experiences obviously had a huge impact on me, and led me to the questions that eventually led to my research – questions many of you have probably asked at some point in your lives: Why when we humans have such an enormous capacity for consciousness, caring, and creativity, has there been so much cruelty, violence, insensitivity? Is it, as we’re often told, inevitable, just human nature, or are there alternatives? And if so, what are these?

And yes, I found that indeed there is an alternative. Of course, I did not start my research until much later, and when I did, it became clear that, as I said, I could not answer these questions looking at societies through the lenses of conventional categories or of conventional studies of society -- that to answer them requires, looking at the *whole* of society, not marginalizing or ignoring the majority of humanity. I also drew from a database that includes at the whole of our lives, including where we all live, in our family and other intimate relations, and at the whole of our history, including the millennia we call prehistory.

What happens as we do this is that it is possible to see *social configurations, connections between various elements of social systems, including elements that are ignored or marginalized by conventional studies and categories that are otherwise invisible*: the configurations of the *domination system* and the *partnership system.*

III. Now the good news is that we do not have to start from square one to move to partnership-oriented societies again.

I say again, because there is today a huge body of evidence dispelling the old story, the story succinctly depicted in the familiar caveman cartoon, where he’s holding a club, a weapon, in one hand and with the other hand dragging a woman by the hair, telling us it’s always been this way, and by implication always will be, violence, injustice, male-dominance, that’s just human nature. That is a false story, because we today know that for millennia, for thousands of years in our prehistory, societies oriented more to the partnership side of the partnership-domination scale: no, they were not ideal but they were more egalitarian, more gender balanced, children were not terrorized into submission, and violence starting with the family all the way to intergroup relations was not the norm. In fact we are learning from archeology, anthropology, linguistics, and DNA studies that warfare is at the most 5000 to 10,000 years old, which is a drop in the evolutionary bucket. So for most of our human adventure here on earth we did not live in domination-oriented societies, which are themselves only a recent development in our cultural history, starting about 5 to 10,000 years ago.

Not only that, if we look at history through the lens of the partnership-domination social scale – because it’s always a matter of degree -- we see that modern history is not just, as we are taught in our schools, a random collection of events. What we then see in modern history is a strong movement toward partnership systems countered by enormous domination resistance and punctured by periodic regressions. Because, despite their differences, all the modern progressive movements have actually challenged the same thing: a tradition of domination.

The Enlightenment rights of man movement challenged the so-called divinely ordained right of kings to rule over their “subjects.” The feminist and later women’s rights movement challenged the “divinely ordained” right of men to rule over the women and children in the “castles” of their homes (a military image). The anti-slavery and later civil rights, anti-colonial, and Black Lives Matter movements challenged the “divinely ordained” right of a supposedly superior race to rule over “inferior” ones. The movement for economic equity challenged top-down control of resources. The peace movement and more recently the movement to stop violence against women and children – which is still a global pandemic, but is finally gaining some attention -- challenge the use of force to impose one’s will on others. The environmental movement challenges our once hallowed conquest and domination of nature that at our level of technological development could take us to an evolutionary dead-end.

But if we look more closely, we see that these movements primarily focused their resources and energy on dismantling the top of the domination pyramid – politics and economics as conventionally defined. This left in place the foundations on which this pyramid keeps rebuilding itself in regression after regression – be it secular like Nazi Germany on the right or Stalin’s Soviet Union on the left, or religious like so-called religious fundamentalism, which if you think about it is domination fundamentalism (they want top-down control in both the family and state or tribe), be it Eastern or Western, Northern or Southern, like Khomeini’s Iran, ISIS, Boko Haran in Africa, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, or the rightist-fundamentalist alliance in the US which has for the last decades had so much influence in US politics, including in the catapulting to power of Trump.

IV. So if we are to prevent these regressions, and all the harm they do, if we are to build a more equitable, sustainable, caring world where technological breakthroughs are really used for the common good, we have to pay attention to the foundations on which politics and economics rest. Because unless we shift the foundations from domination to partnership we will continue to have regressions, with all the suffering and horror they bring. And AI and other technological breakthroughs will be used in service of domination, be it of people or nature – *not* for the common good.

All of which takes me to what I want to use the rest of our time together to discuss: four cornerstones we must shift from domination to partnership if we are to have the foundations to support a more equitable, caring, and less violent system – and as you will see, these are quite different from what the mainstream conversation, as well as the academic conversation, has been about, at least until now.

I). The first of these four cornerstones we have to shift from domination to partnership if we are to stop having regressions to domination is *childhood*.

Why? We know today from both biological and social science that what children first experience and observe directly impacts how our brains develop, and hence how we think, feel, and act, including how we vote, what kinds of policies we support, and how we develop and apply technological breakthroughs.

As detailed in my most recent book, with anthropologist Douglas Fry, *Nurturing Our Humanity*, findings from neuroscience show that our brains’ neural pathways are not set at birth. So the issue is *not* genes; we have been told a false story. The issue is gene expression, and the first years are the time when our brains develop in interaction with our environments, which for us humans of course are primarily cultural, and are very different depending on the degree of orientation of our families, education, religion, etc. to either the domination or partnership configuration.

When family relations are based on chronic violations of human rights, and these are considered normal and moral, children have mental and emotional models for condoning such violations not only in intimate relations, but in all relations. And if these relations are violent, children learn that violence from the more powerful toward the less powerful is an acceptable way of dealing with conflicts and problems.

Now fortunately there are people who reject these teachings. But many others replicate them, not only in intimate relations, but also in national and international ones. So they will vote for and accept punitive policies and practices, accept and even yearn for strong-man rule, go into denial about their own childhood experiences and instead divert their pain and rage into scapegoating the groups their authority figures tell them are to blame for all their troubles – all the convoluted psycho-social dynamics we are today finally examining.

And, while we can change all through life, studies from neuroscience also show that for people from rigid domination backgrounds – where caring is inextricably connected with coercion – it is very difficult to change. Indeed this difficulty is actuallyreflected in how the brain is structured, which helps explain climate change denial, pandemic denial, and other inabilities to adapt, and even accept, change.

So what do we do? The first step is to recognize the problem. We are finding out today through studies such as the ACEs or Adverse Childhood Experiences study that even in the United States – where genital mutilation, child marriage, child abuse are not culturally accepted – the highly stressful childhood experiences found in domination oriented cultures and subcultures are still very prevalent. And we must change that.

The good news is that we have many resources today for partnership rather than domination parenting, for authoritative rather than authoritarian and nonviolent parenting or for other caregivers of children. One of these is the “Caring and Connected Parenting Guide,” based on the latest neuroscience, that you can download for free in both English and Spanish at [www.centerforpartnership.org](http://www.centerforpartnership.org), a site that has many more resources, many more tools that you can use.

2). Which takes us to the second cornerstone for a new and better normal: *gender*

Now again, we have been taught that how gender roles and relations are culturally constructed is “just” a women’s issue. In reality as you will see, it is a central social and economic and technological issue that directly affect all of us, women, men, children of all genders, and everyone in between. Even beyond that, it directly affects what we are taught is, or is not, valuable.

Let’s start with what children learn about what it means to be a girl or a boy, a woman or a man, in rigid domination systems. This is actually another lesson necessary for domination systems. Becausethe equation of difference – beginning with the fundamental difference in our species between the female and male forms – with superiority or inferiority, dominating or being dominated, being served or serving, is hardly a model for social, racial, and economic equity.

When children acquire this mental and emotional template before their brains are fully developed, they will automatically apply this template to other differences, be it a different race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. In the Middle East and Asia, it can be Shia vs. Sunni, in the US, it can be racism or anti-Semitism, in many region it’s anti-immigrant or scapegoating a different sexual orientation. It is, simply put, *in-group vs. out-group thinking*, the kind of thinking that we see all around us so profoundly and negatively impacts our world, and that, as we are finding out, is often embedded in the programming of AI, in the algorithms that are making so much difference in our lives.

And that is not all. Children in domination cultures and subcultures also learn another key lesson foundational to imposing and maintaining these systems: that not only women but anything stereotypically associated with women, including caring, caregiving, and nonviolence, are not as important as anything associated with men and so-called “hard” masculine, like conquest and domination.

So what we have inherited from more rigid domination times is a *gendered system of values* in which, along with the subordination of the female half of humanity comes the subordination of caring, caregiving, nonviolence, and other traits and activities stereotypically considered “soft” or “feminine.”

This gendered system of values clearly has very bad consequences for women and girls, but it also adversely affects everyone’s quality of life: women, men, and children. We at the Center for Partnership Studies already documented this back in 1995, in a study drawing from statistical data from 89-nations: *Women, Men, and the Global Quality of Life*. Since then other studies, including the World Economic Forums’ *Gender Gap* reports, have confirmed these finds, showing a strong correlation between the status of women and economic success.

Obviously, depriving half the population of equal opportunities deprives societies of enormous contributions. But as long as women are devalued so also are policies considered “soft” or “feminine” in domination systems.

For example, following this gendered system of values, there always seems to be money for prisons (think of the punitive male head of household “masculine” stereotype of domination systems), or for weapons and wars (another domination stereotype, the hero as warrior or killer). But somehow there is no money for healthcare, for childcare, for elder care – for “soft” stereotypically feminine policies.

3). This takes us to the third cornerstone that we have to shift from domination to partnership: economics. But economics from a new perspective that goes beyond the tired old argument about capitalism versus socialism and vice versa.

I want to remind us that both capitalist and socialist economic theory came out of early industrial times, out of the 1700s and 1800s, so on that count alone they would be antiquated in our 21st century knowledge/service postindustrial age*.*

But even more importantly, both capitalism and socialism came out of times that oriented much more closely to the domination system: a time when the work of caring for people, starting in early childhood, and of keeping a clean and healthy environment, was to be performed by women for free in male-controlled households. So in many places, even in the mid 1800s when Marx wrote, if a woman was negligently injured, she could not sue for damages; only her husband could sue for loss of her services.

So neither Adam Smith nor Karl Marx recognized the economic value of this “women’s work.” And for both Smith and Marx, nature was there to be exploited. So there is nothing in either capitalism or socialism about the vital importance of caring for people or for nature.

Both capitalism and socialism, as detailed in my book *The Real Wealth of Nations: Creating a Caring Economics,* are based on a flawed, incomplete model of economics *that fails to include the vital 3 life-sustaining economic sectors: the natural economy, the volunteer community economy, and the household economy.*

What we need is a new caring economics of *partnerism* that gives real value to, and adequately rewards caring for, people starting in childhood and caring for nature, not just in rhetoric but in reality, in ways that put food on the table and a roof over our heads.

The Covid 19 pandemic has shown that our “essential workers” are those doing care work, healthcare, childcare, providing food and other essentials that sustain life.

An important first step is changing our measures of economic success. Consider that GDP, the most widely used measure of economic health, includes activities that harm and even take life: making and selling cigarettes and the resulting medical and funeral costs; they are great for GDP. Fast foods and packaged foods that contain hi fructose corn syrup, their results in obesity, heart disease, diabetes, strokes, and then the funeral costs of all this, it’s all on the plus side of GDP. And so are oil spills and deforestation, with an old stand of trees only considered “valuable” or part of GDP after it is chopped down, or killed.

But not only does GDP put negatives in as positives; it fails to include the huge economic value of the work of caring for people in households. And this, even though we are beginning to quantify its economic value; for instance, an Australian report shows that if the unpaid “caring” household work were included, it would comprise 50 percent of the reported GDP!

Yet none of this information is found in conventional economic treatises, it’s not taught in our schools and universities – and it’s up to us, to you, to see that it is.

So we at the Center for Partnership Studies developed new economic metrics: Social Wealth Economic Indicators or SWEIs. Unlike GDP, as well as unlike most so-called GDP alternatives, SWEIs provide empirical evidence of the enormous *economic value* of the work of caring in terms of *human capacity development* -- which is the most important economic asset in our new knowledge/service age, when manufacturing and so many other routine jobs are being replaced by automation and robotics. SWEIs are also unique in that they take into account what we know from neuroscience: the vital importance of what children experience and observe in their early years, especially from 1 to 5, when 85% of the structure of our brains are laid.

SWEIs – and the SWI Index we are now developing updating and condensing the 24 SWEIs into one easily accessible number -- provide government and business policy makers the missing data they need to make sound decisions. For example, they show that the United States lags far behind other developed nations in this investment, leading to the fact that it has the highest child poverty rates and the highest maternal mortality rates of any OECD country. Not only that, not surprisingly since the US invests less than other OECD nations in caring for nature, we also contribute more to climate change and other environmental crises.

You can find out more at [www.centerforpartnership.org](http://www.centerforpartnership.org)

So yes, investing in caring for people, starting in childhood, is very cost-effective, as is caring for our natural life-support systems. And so are caring business policies. Not only do businesses that have caring policies, and the partnership structures that go with this do extremely well, so also do nations.

Again, I want to say that fortunately we do not have to start from scratch; there are trends in this direction, as we clearly see if we look at nations that at the beginning of the 20th century were so poor they had famines, such as Finland, Norway, and Sweden, nations that today are regularly in the highest ranks of the World Economic Forum’s Global Competitiveness Reports. Not coincidentally, these nations pioneered caring policies such as government-supported childcare, universal healthcare, stipends to help families care for children, elder care with dignity, generous paid parental leave for both mothers and fathers.

But these policies, and the resulting high life spans, low poverty rates, low crime rates, and a generally high standard of living for all did not happen in a vacuum**.** Nor did it happen because, as we are often told, because these are socialist nations; they are *not* socialist, they have a very healthy market economy. Nor is it because they are relatively small homogenous nations; there are many small homogenous nations that do not have caring policies, that are very domination-oriented. *All this happened because these nations are the contemporary nations that have moved most closely to the partnership side of the partnership-domination continuum.*

They’re not ideal, but *first*, they have more democracy and equality in *both* the family and the state. *Second*, they are in the forefront of trying to leave behind traditions of violence and domination; they pioneered the first peace studies, the first laws prohibiting physical discipline of children in families, a very important partnership trend, now found in over 50 more nations. And *third*, they have the lowest gender gaps.

They have a much more equal partnership between women and men - 40 to 50 percent of their national legislators are female. And as the status of women rises, men no longer find it such a threat to their status, to their “masculinity,” to also embrace more caring practices and policies.

So we are back to connecting the dots – and recognizing the key importance of the status of women and children for a nation’ politics, economics, technology, and everything else.

I should add, this is essential for cutting through seemingly intractable cycles of poverty worldwide. Because the devaluation of women and anything stereotypically associated with women -- such as the work of care still primarily performed by women for little or no pay in most world regions -- is a major reasons the mass of the world's poor and the poorest of the poor are women and children.

4). This takes me to the fourth cornerstone: *narratives and language*.

Many of the stories we have inherited serve to reinforce the notion that domination systems are inevitable: just human nature. Whether it’s original sin or selfish genes, I don’t know why they argue with each other, it’s the same story: we are bad, so we have to be strictly controlled, dominated from the top.

Then there are all the stories reinforcing male dominance, like poor Sleeping Beauty, she can’t even wake up without a man coming to give her a kiss; talk about learned helplessness and dependence. Or the epics, and today, mass entertainment, that idealize relations of domination and submission as well as violence. And how embedded the devaluation of women and the “feminine” is – as when boys and men who are sensitive, nonviolent, and caring are mocked as “wimps” or “sissies” – even by women indoctrinated with domination values.

And then there is our language, all this is reflected and embedded in it. Consider that the only terms in our language that refer to gender in social relations are matriarchy and patriarchy – just two version of the domination system, with no word for a partnership alternative. Consider that familiar categories, like right/left, capitalist/socialist, religious/secular, Eastern/Western, Northern/Southern (as well as conventional studies of society) marginalize or just ignore the majority of humanity: women and children.

So we are back to where we started: the urgent need for new language, especially new social and economic categories such as *partnership system, domination system, partnerism, the partnership domination social scale*. This is vital. Linguistic psychologists have long told us that the categories provided by a culture’s language channel our thinking -- so it is very difficult, almost impossible, to even imagine other alternatives.

We need new terms, new words, not only partnerism, but terms that help us see how everything is different depending on the degree or orientation to the partnership or domination side of the social scale.

For example, I introduced the distinction between *hierarchies of domination* (we are all familiar with these, you either obey or there will be lots of pain) and the *hierarchies of actualization* characteristic of partnership oriented systems. Because every society needs parents, teachers, managers, leaders, But how these roles are structured is very different. In hierarchies of actualization, accountability, respect, and benefit don’t just flow from the bottom up but both ways. And the normative ideal for power is not power over, but power with and power to, our great power to create, to empower rather than disempower.

XIV. VI. There is much more I would like to share with you, but we don’t have the time, so I want to close by again saying that the struggle for our future is not between religion and secularism, East and West, right and left, capitalism and socialism, but between the domination elements in all our cultures and the partnership norms we urgently need.

And so also is the struggle of whether or not AI and other technological breakthroughs are, or are not, used for the common good.

And every one of us can play a leadership role in accelerating the shift from domination to partnership worldwide.

Yes, we must continue our short-term work, such as working to see that industries with high carbon emissions are not government-subsidized, or that the institutional racism we see all around us is exposed and left behind. But if we are to prevent losing gains already made, if we are to prevent the regressions to domination that cause so much misery and destruction, we also have to do the longer-term work.

So I invite you to join me in the work of cultural transformation, focusing on these 4 cornerstones of childhood, gender, economics, and narratives/language – to shift them from domination to partnership. None of us can do everything, but everyone can do something to build foundations for a more equitable, caring, and sustainable partnership world. And you in the AI community can play a major role in this essential cultural transformation.

I thank you.