



Prosperity as Health

Why we need an economy of care for a liveable future

Tim Jackson

6th March 2026

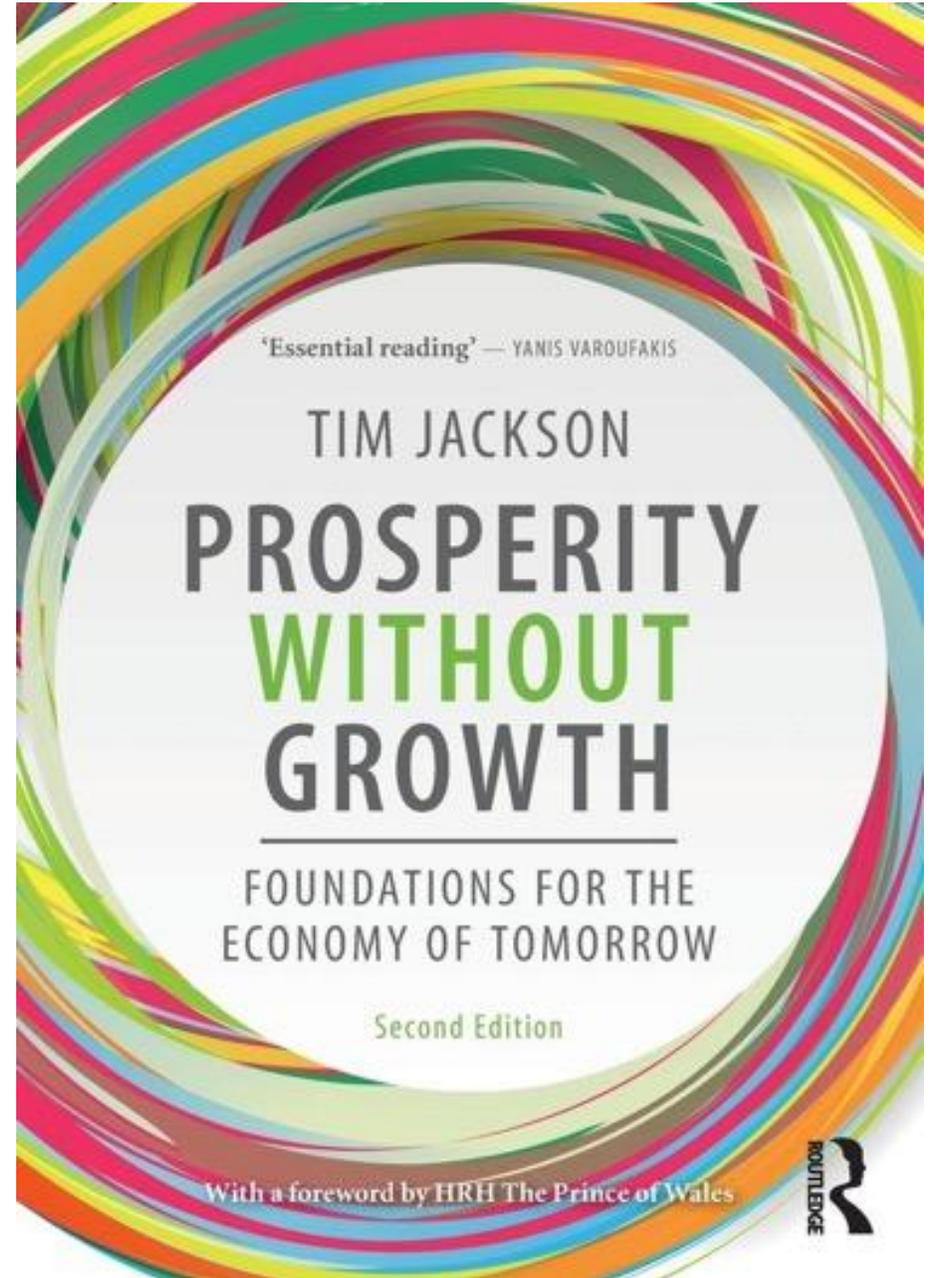
Prosperity without Growth

(Routledge 2009/2017)

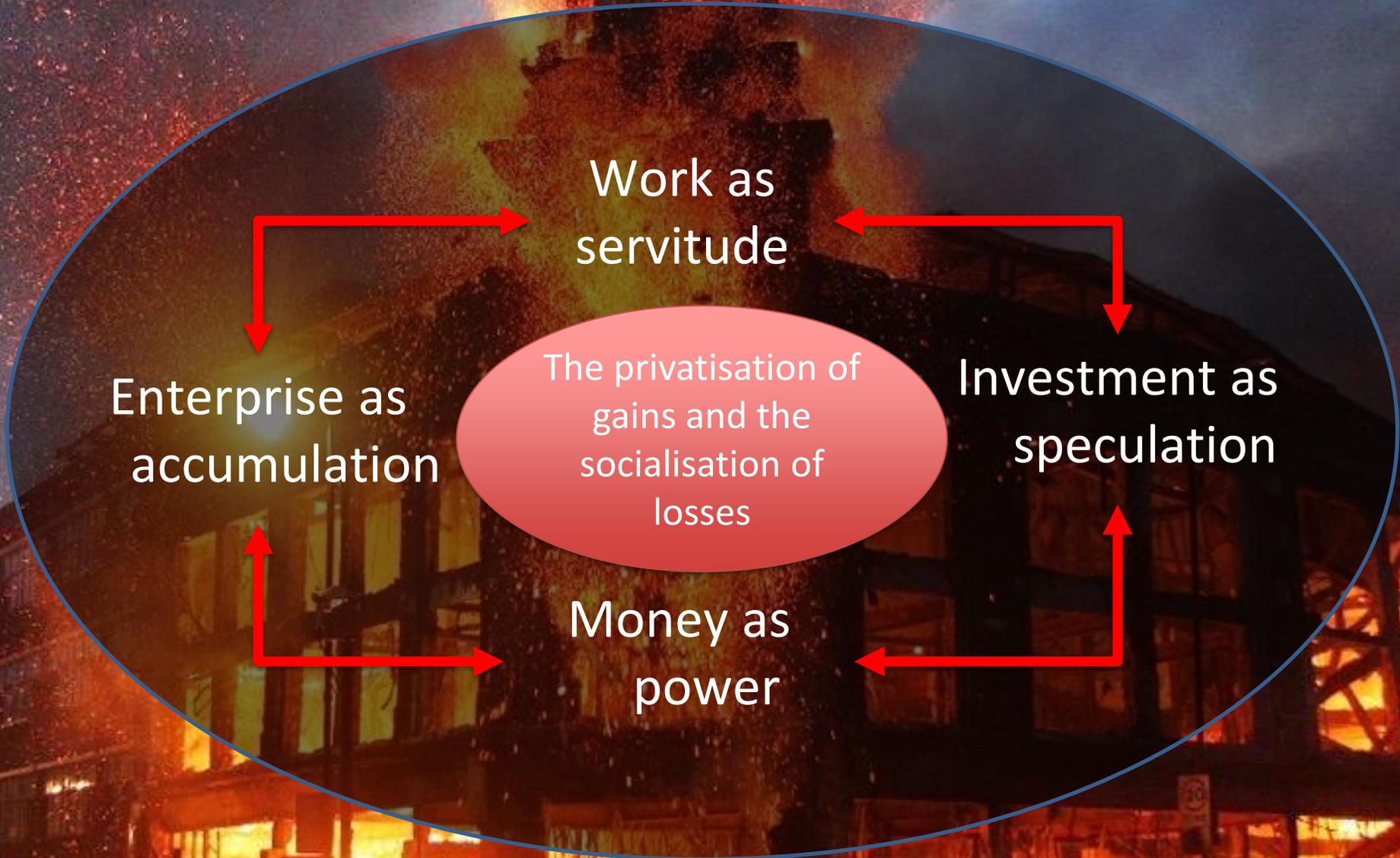
What can prosperity possibly look like on a finite planet?

Can we 'decouple' growth from impact?

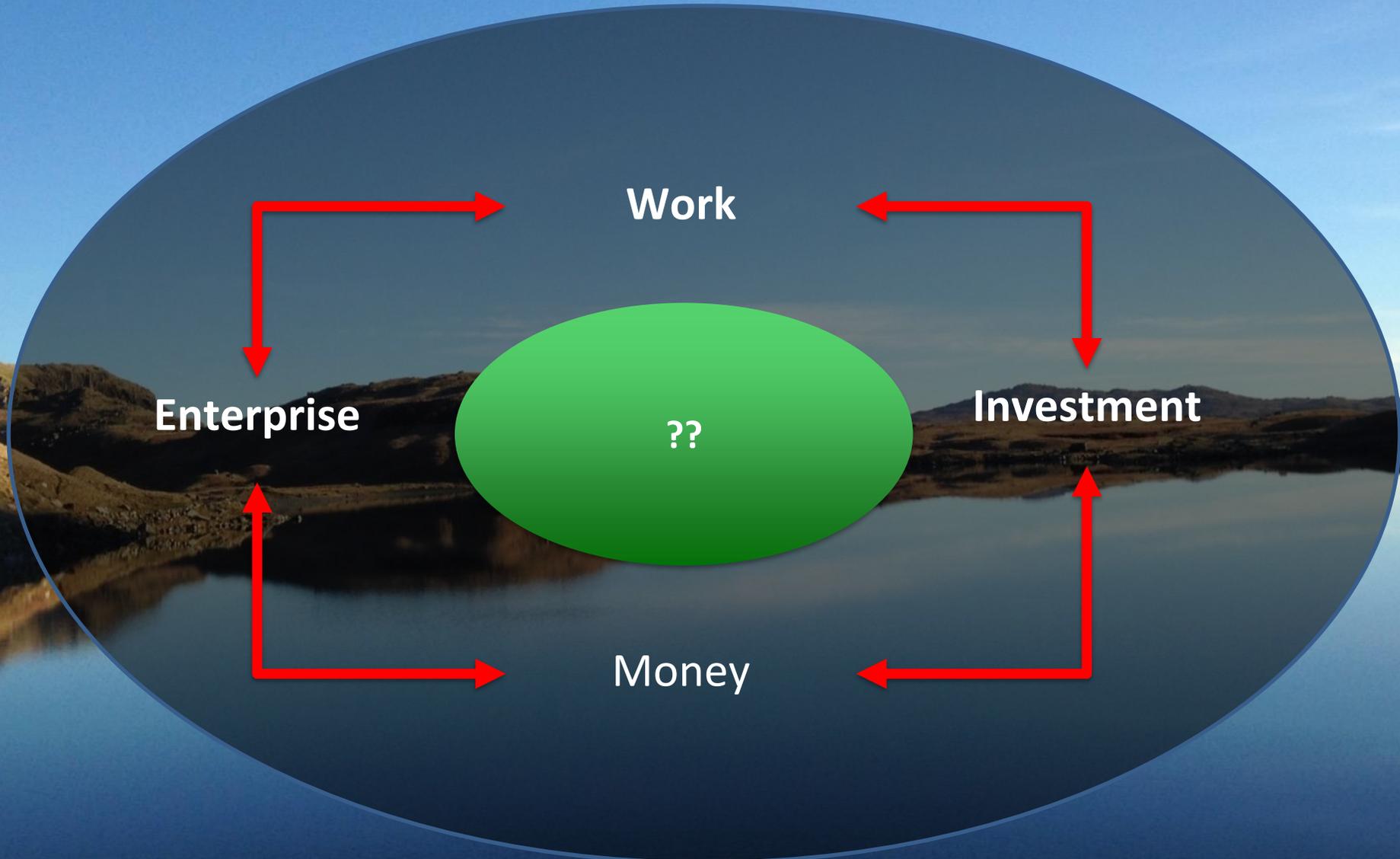
What does an economy that works for people and planet look like?



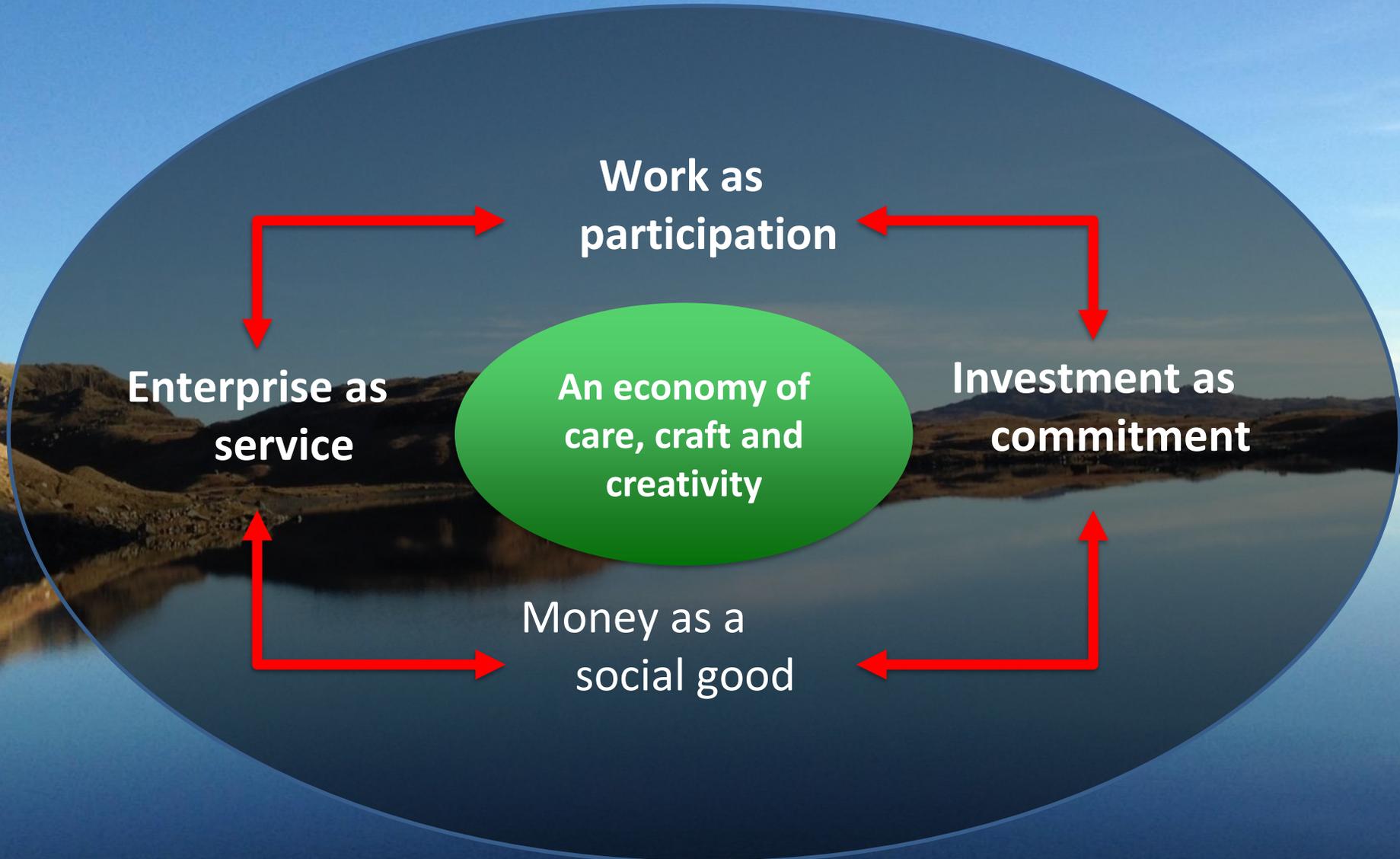
Rethink Economics



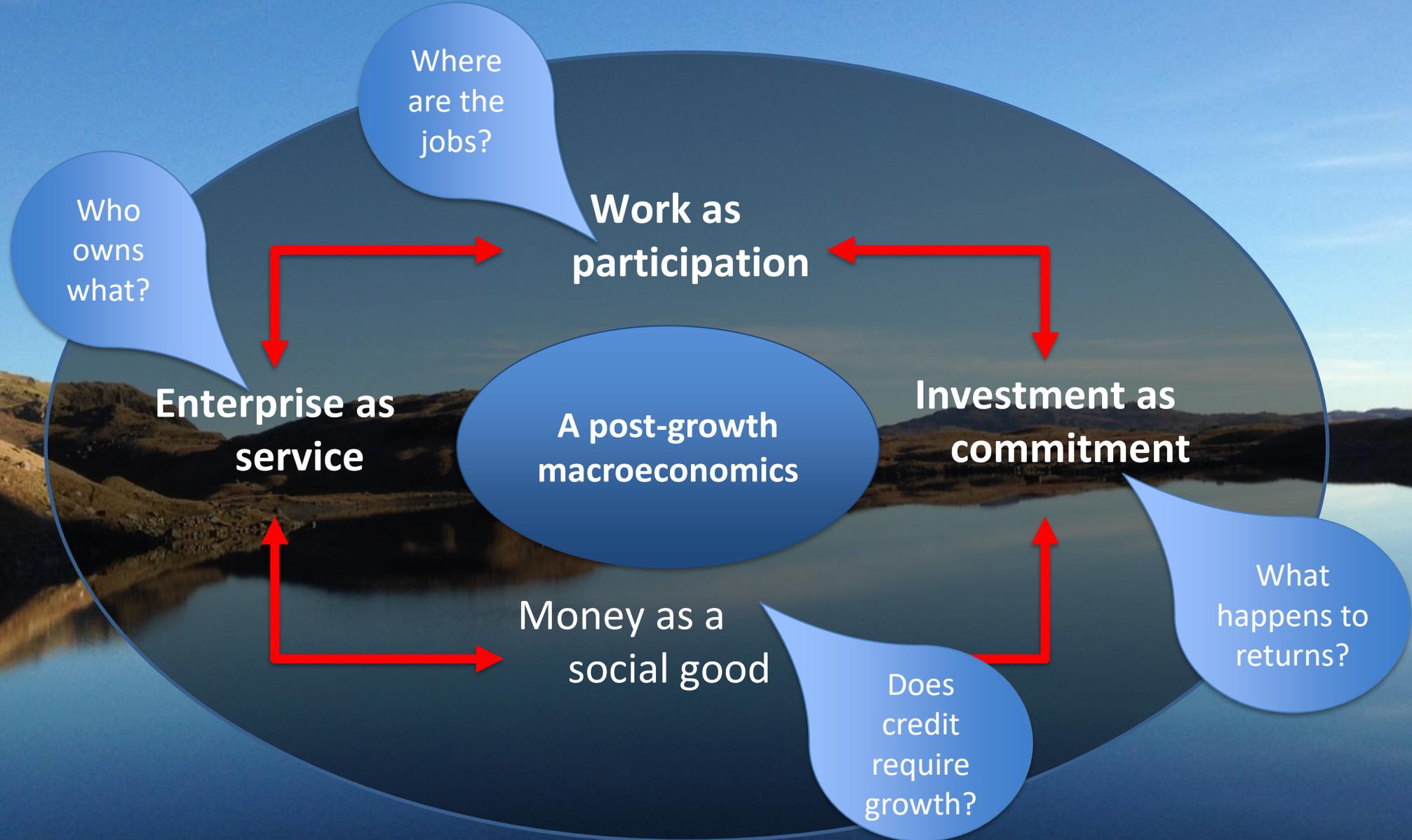
Rethink Economics



Rethink Economics



Rethink Economics



Prosperity as health

‘The first wealth is health.’

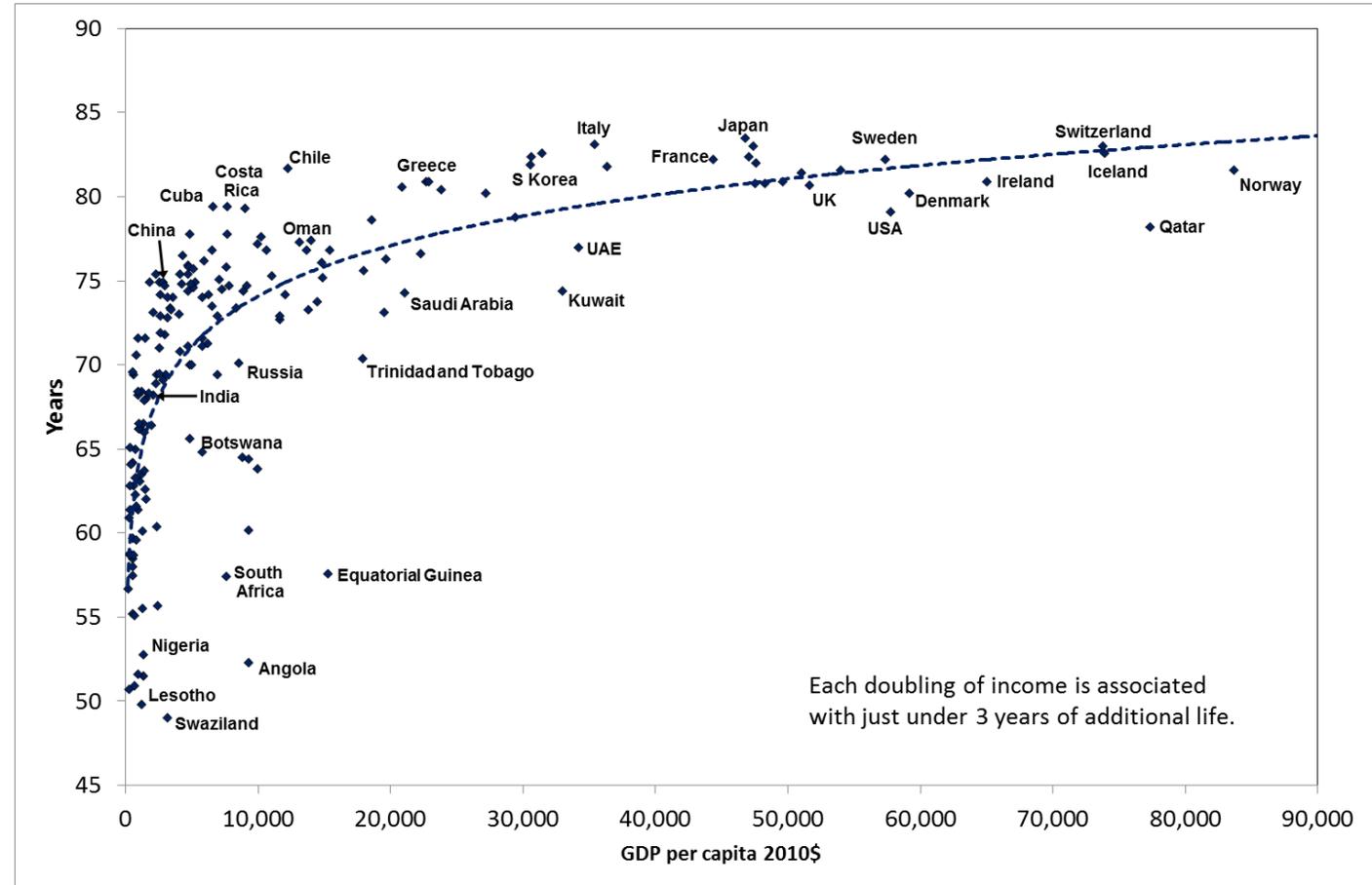
Ralph Waldo Emerson

‘There is no wealth but life.’

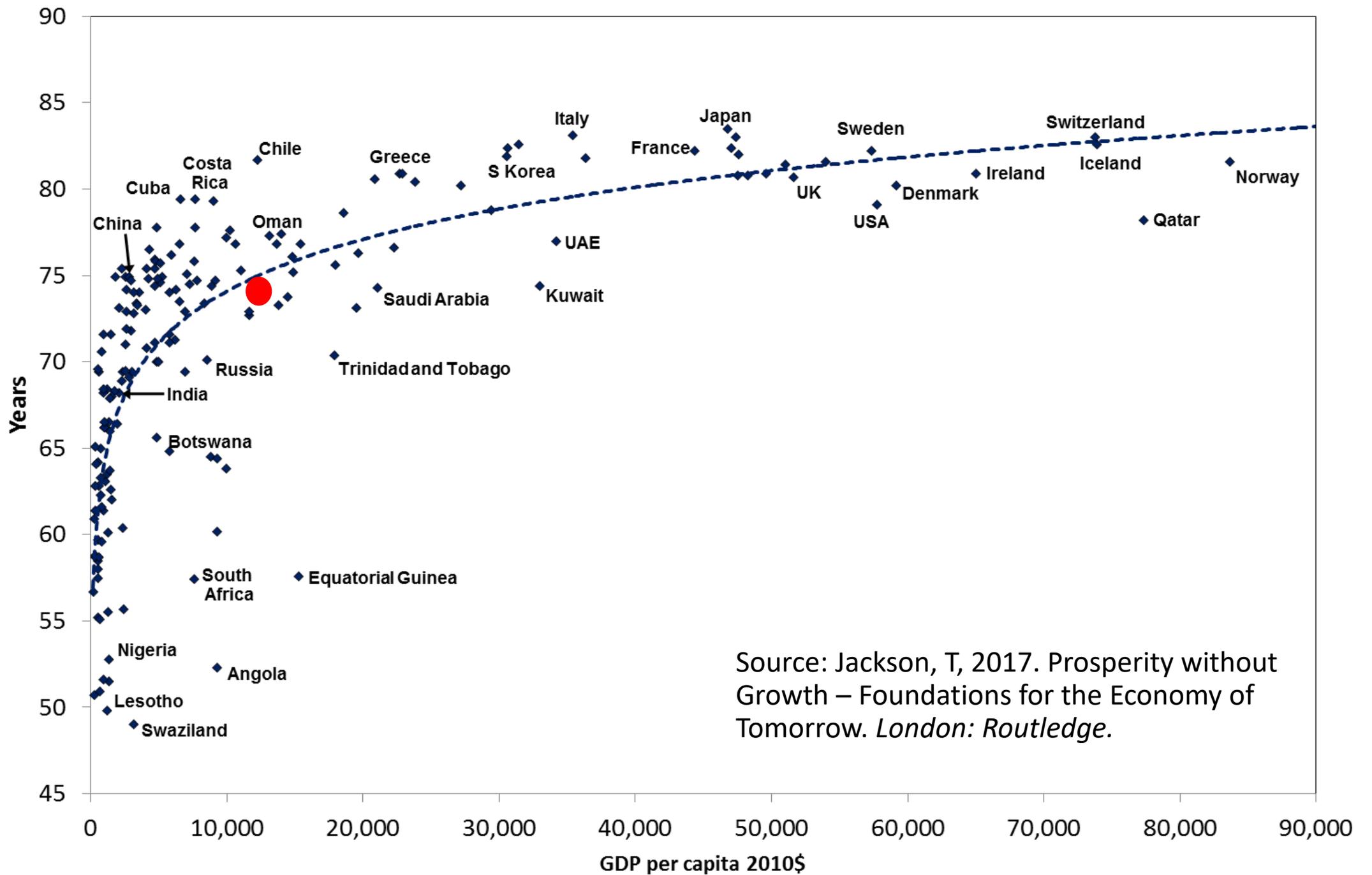
John Ruskin

‘I went looking for wealth and
found it was my health.’

Rumi



Life expectancy vs income



Source: Jackson, T, 2017. Prosperity without Growth – Foundations for the Economy of Tomorrow. London: Routledge.

Economy as Care

Care as: ‘an activity that includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our “world” so that we can live in it as well as possible’.

Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto 1990



Health as balance

‘All the vital mechanisms, however varied they may be, always have one purpose, that of maintaining the integrity of the conditions of life within the internal environment.’

Claude Bernard, 1878

N205



the WISDOM of the BODY

REVISED and ENLARGED EDITION

WALTER B. CANNON, M.D.

How the human body reacts to disturbance and danger
and maintains the stability essential to life.

Care as a restorative force

‘When the tide is receding from the beach it is easy to believe that one can empty the ocean with a pail.’

Rene Dubos 1959

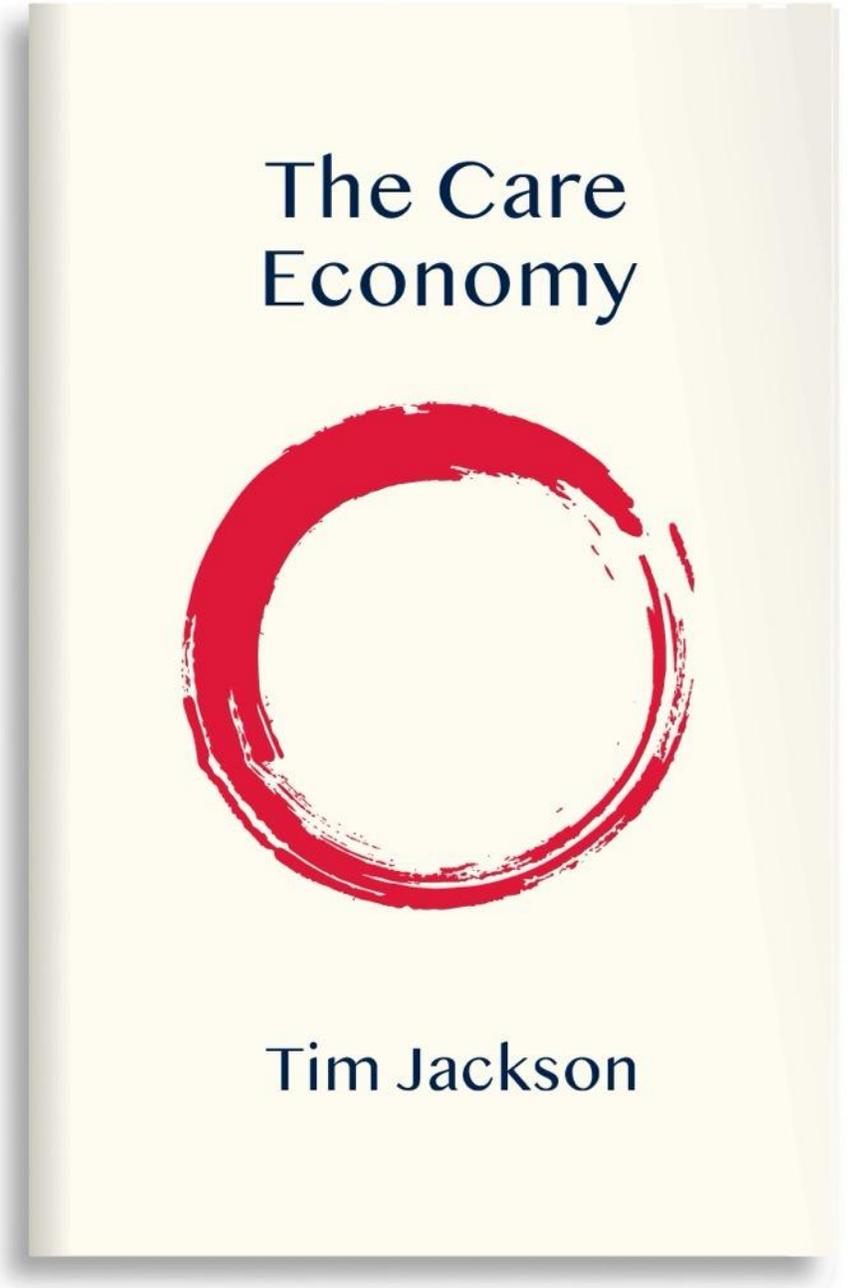


The Care Economy

(Polity 2025)

- Prosperity as health
- Economy as care

- Care economy as post-growth transition



Care Economy as transition

kT CO₂e per \$m final demand

700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0

0

5

10

15

20

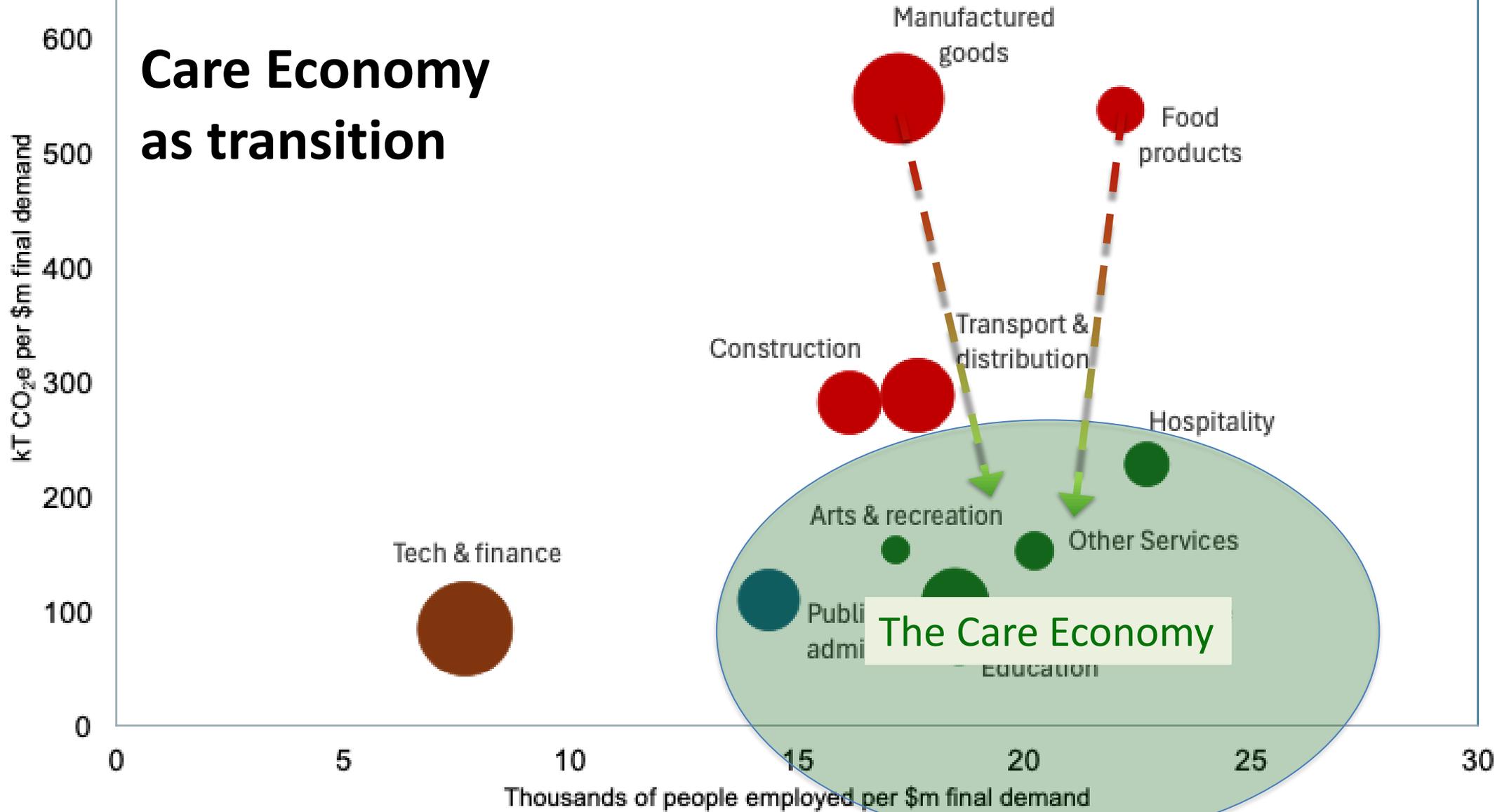
25

30

People employed per \$m final demand

Source: Jackson, T, C Corlet Walker and B Gallant 2026. *The Case for the Care Economy*. CUSP Working Paper

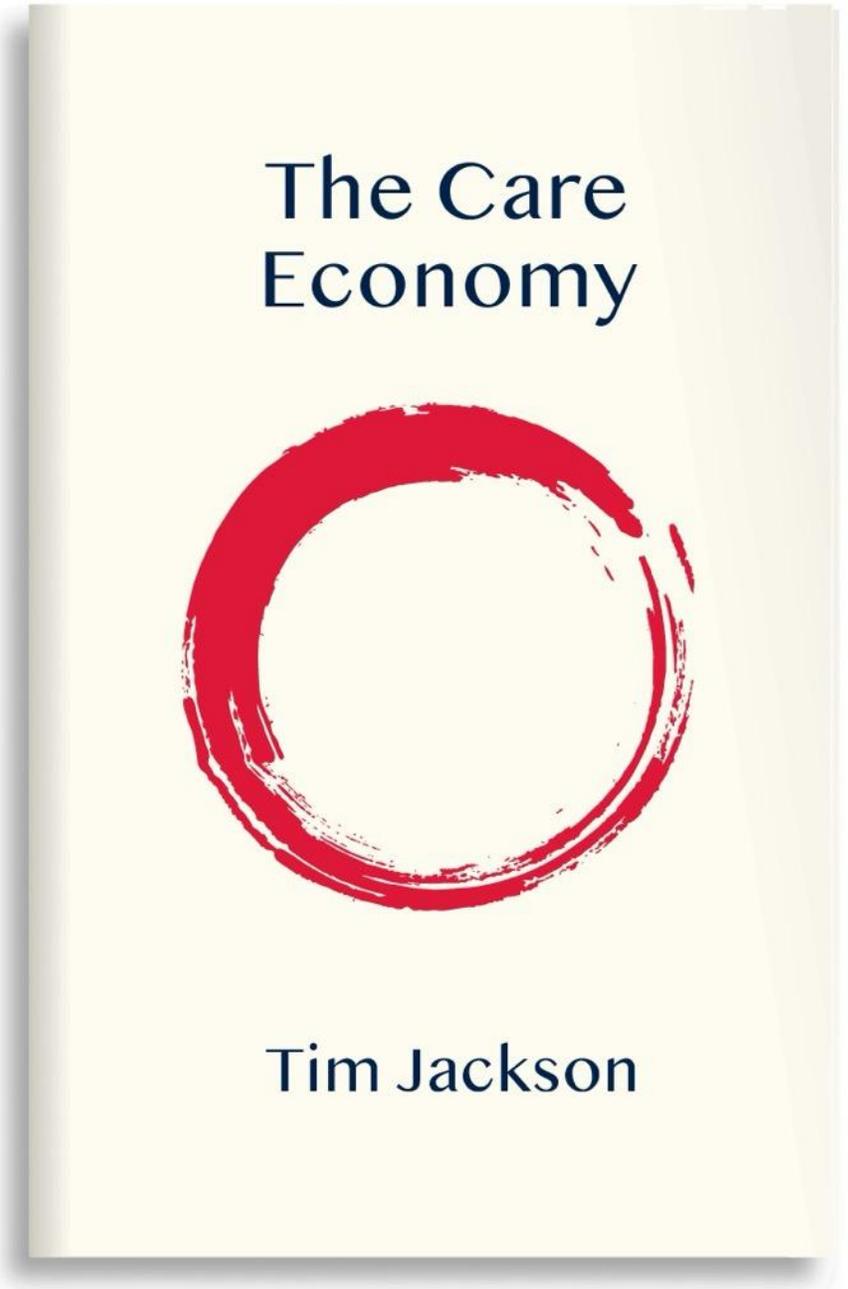
Care Economy as transition



The Care Economy

- Prosperity as health
- Economy as care

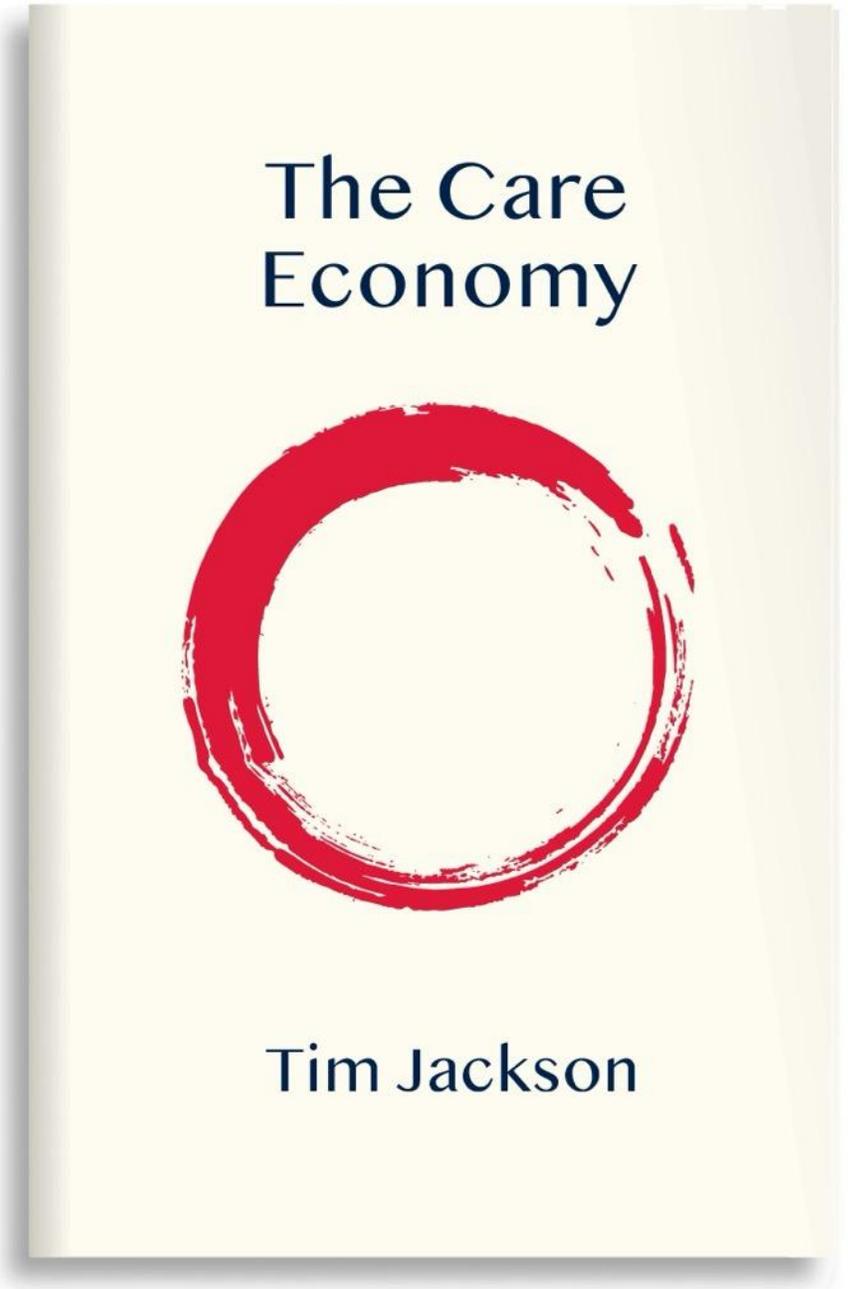
- Why doesn't it happen?
- What shall we do about it?



What shall we do about it?

‘The question “What shall we do about it?” is only ever asked when we don’t understand the problem.’

Alan Watts 1951



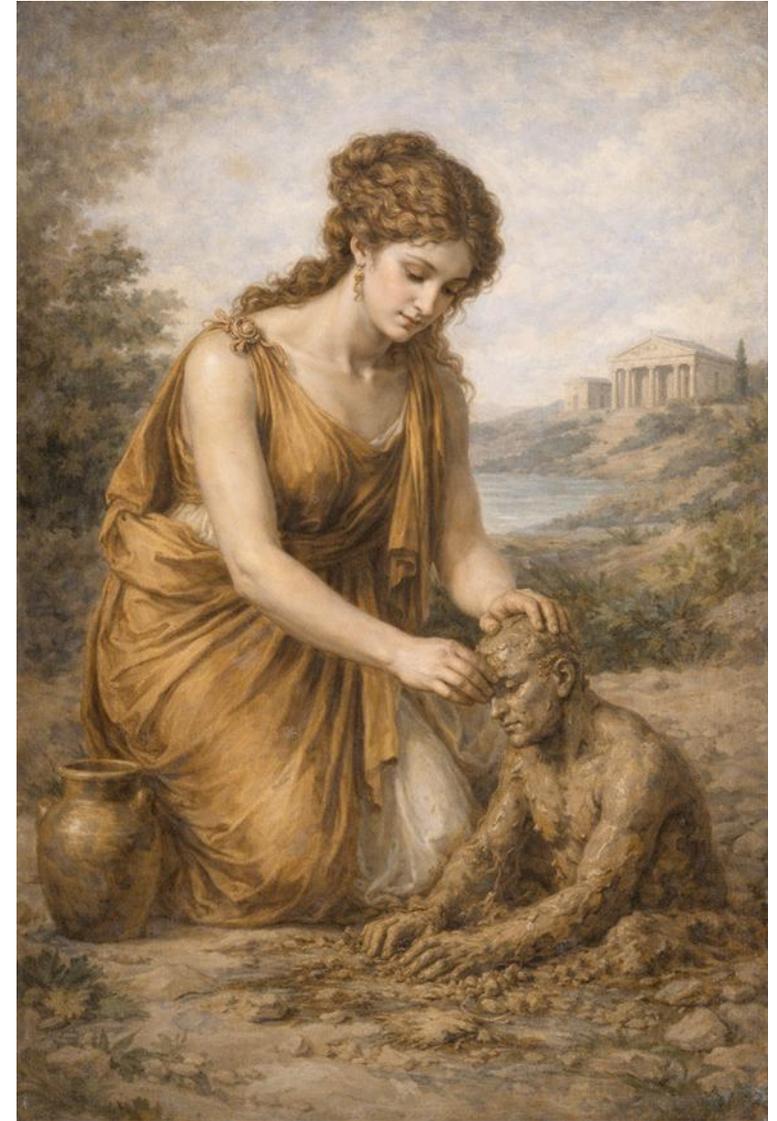
The Myth of Care

(Gaius Julius Hyginus ~100CE)

‘Never looked for, always there Cursed
and flattered, I am Care.

Have I never crossed your path?’

Goethe 1832



The Goddess Care (Cura)

The Gods of Health

- Asclepius (father): ancient Greek god of medicine and healing;
- Hygiea (daughter): ancient Greek god of health, cleanliness and sanitation.



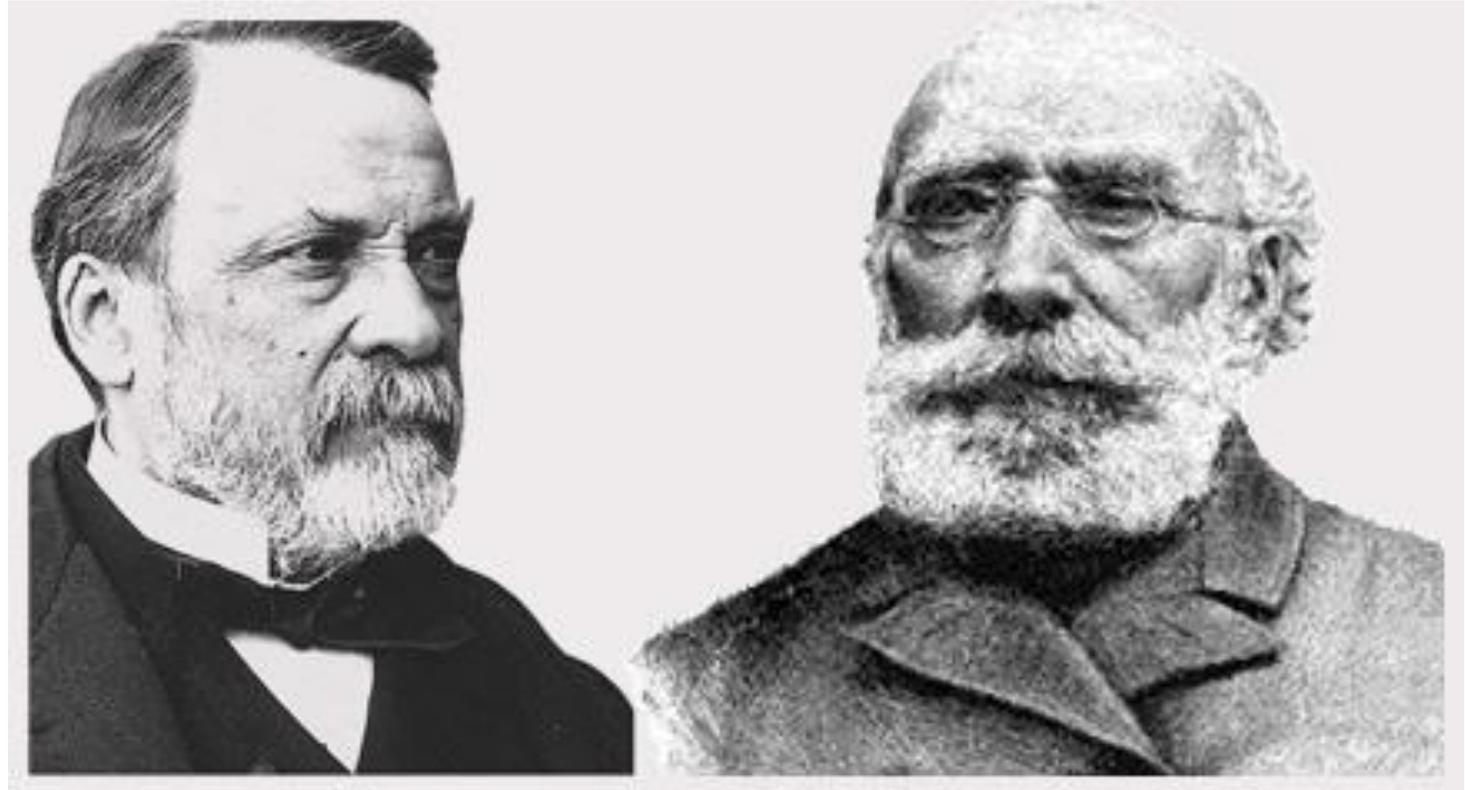
Asclepius



Hygiea

Pathogenesis

- Germ theory: germs cause disease (Louis Pasteur); kill the germ: remove the disease
- Terrain theory: disease occurs when the terrain (the internal environment) is weakened (Antoine Béchamp).



Louis Pasteur 1822-1895)

Antoine Béchamp (1816-1908)

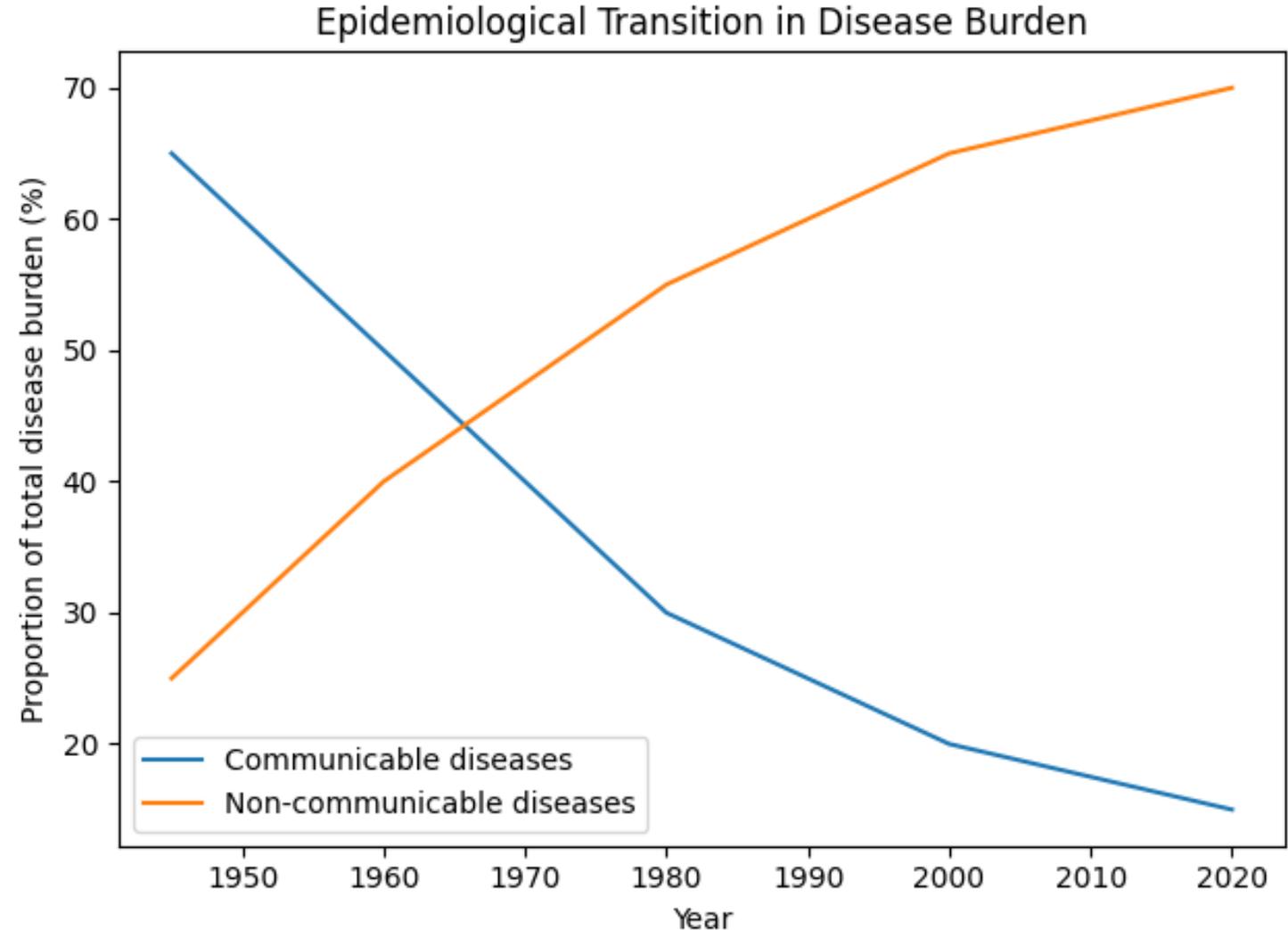
The Flexner Report

- Extolled scientific [lab-based] rigour;
- Professionalised modern medicine;
- Outlawed naturopathy;
- Funded by Carnegie and Rockefeller.

MEDICAL EDUCATION
IN THE
UNITED STATES AND CANADA
A REPORT TO
THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING
BY
ABRAHAM FLEXNER
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HENRY S. PRITCHETT
PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION

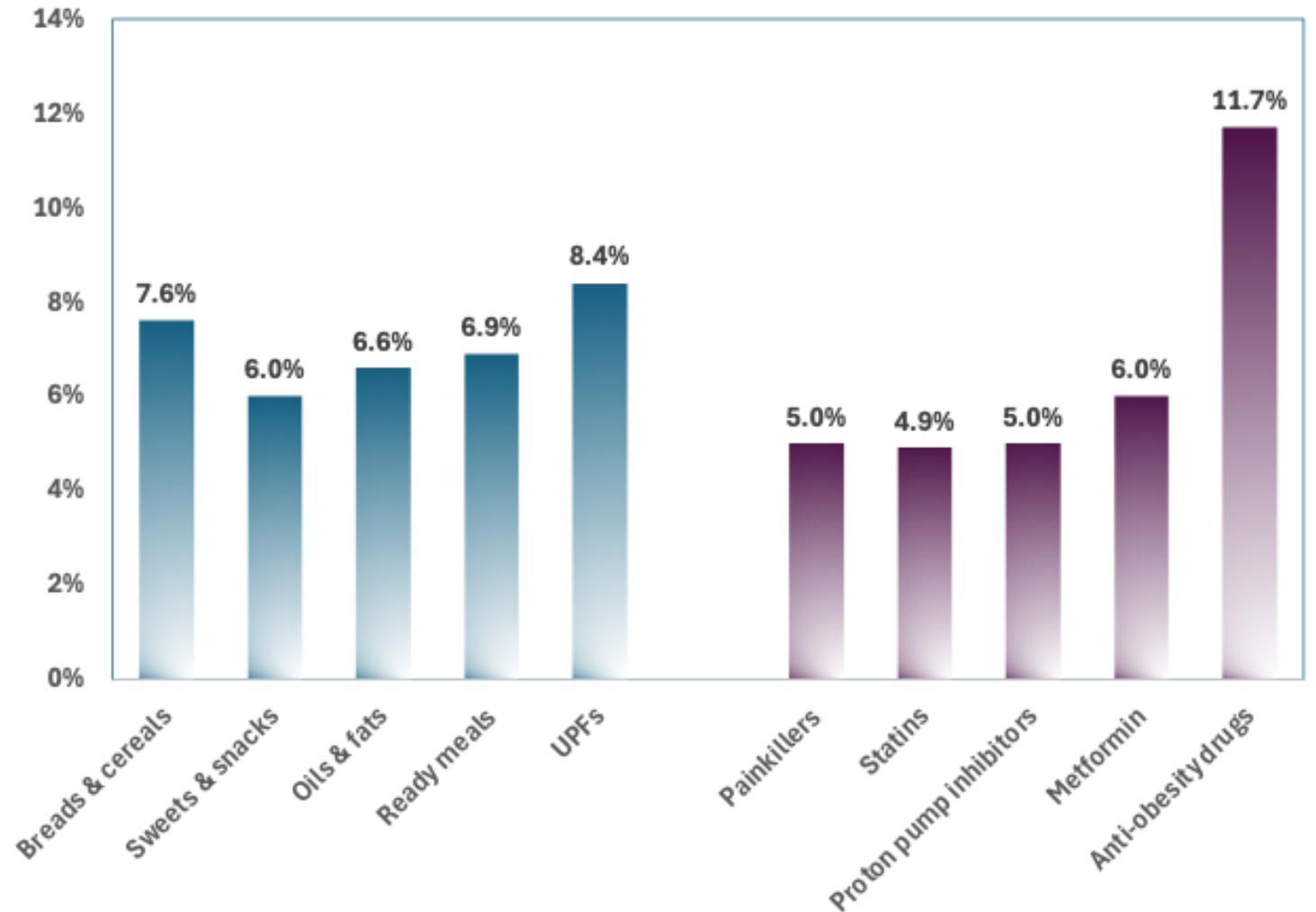
Epidemiological Transition

- A decline in infectious diseases (causes disputed);
- A rise in non-communicable diseases (causes clear)



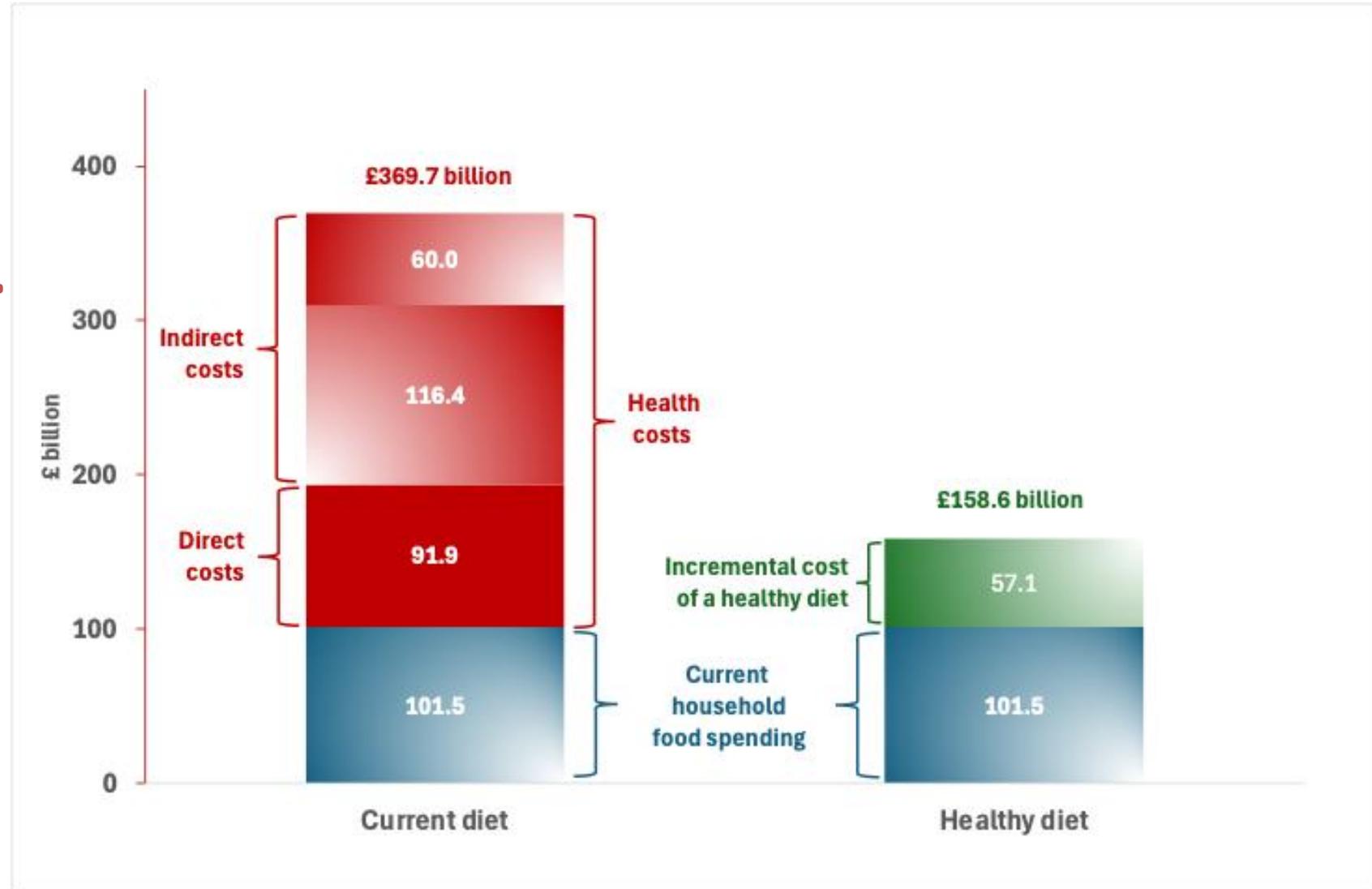
The Careless Economy: the 'gains'

Source: Jackson, T.
2024 *The False Economy of Big Food, Food Farming and Countryside*
Commission, London.



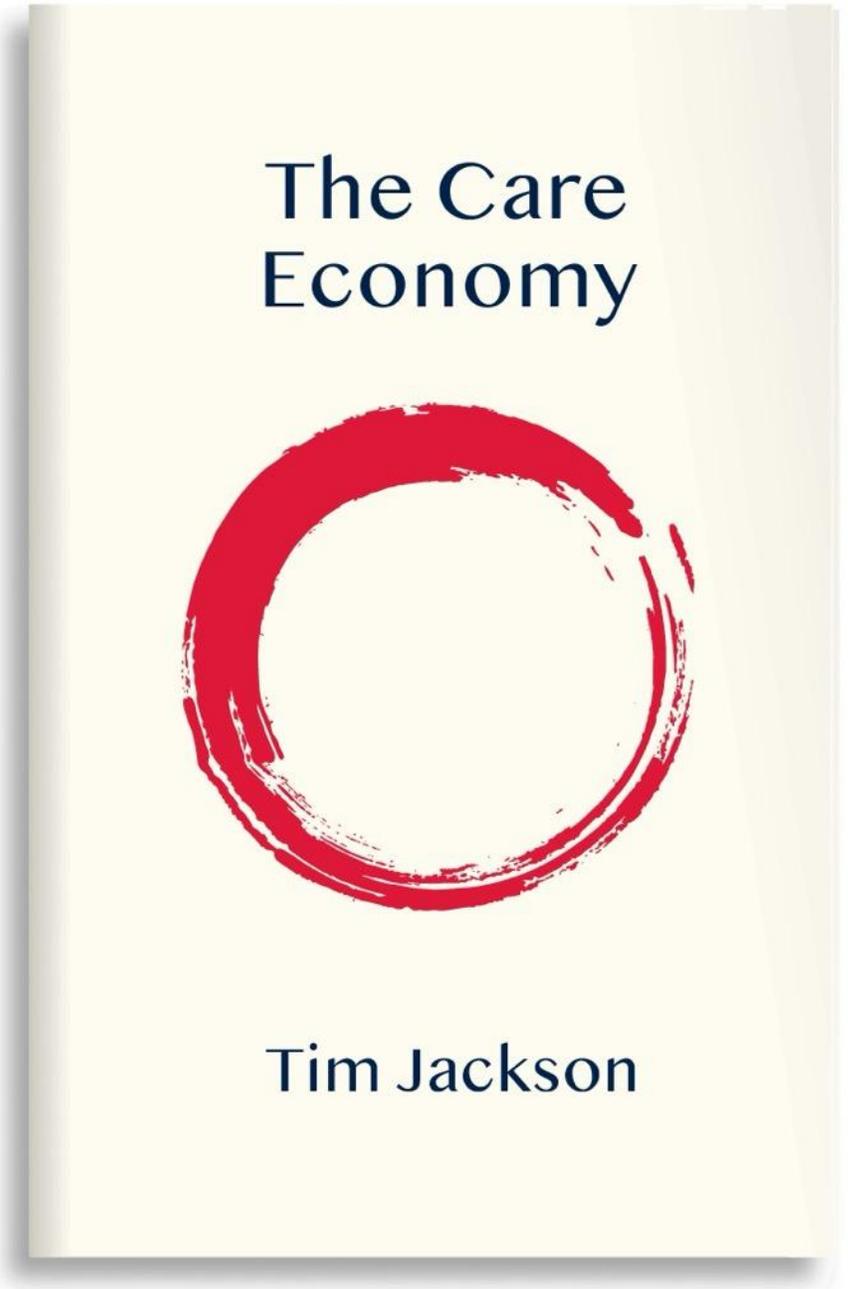
The Careless Economy: the 'losses'

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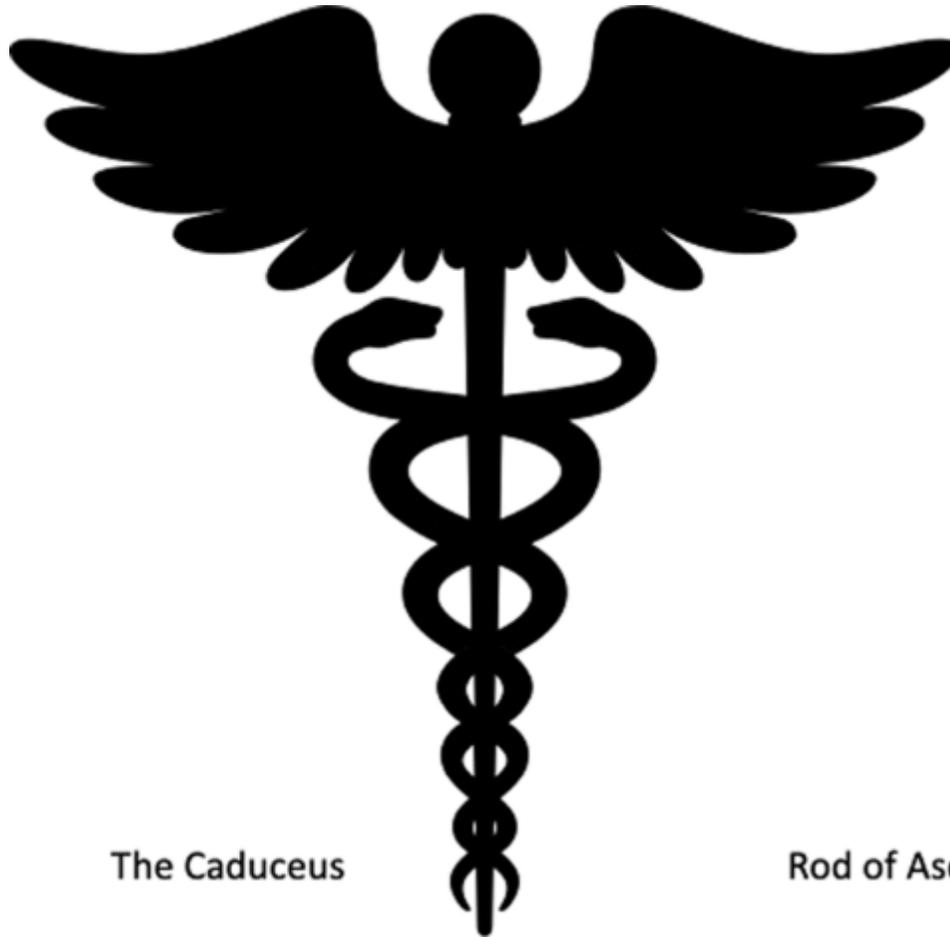
Why doesn't it happen?

- Care is subjugated to growth
- Care takes time and 'time is money'
- Care is gendered
- Care is moralised
- Care is corrupted by capitalism (and patriarchy)



False Gods

- The rod of Asclepius: a symbol of health and healing;
- The Caduceus: the symbol of Hermes.



The Caduceus



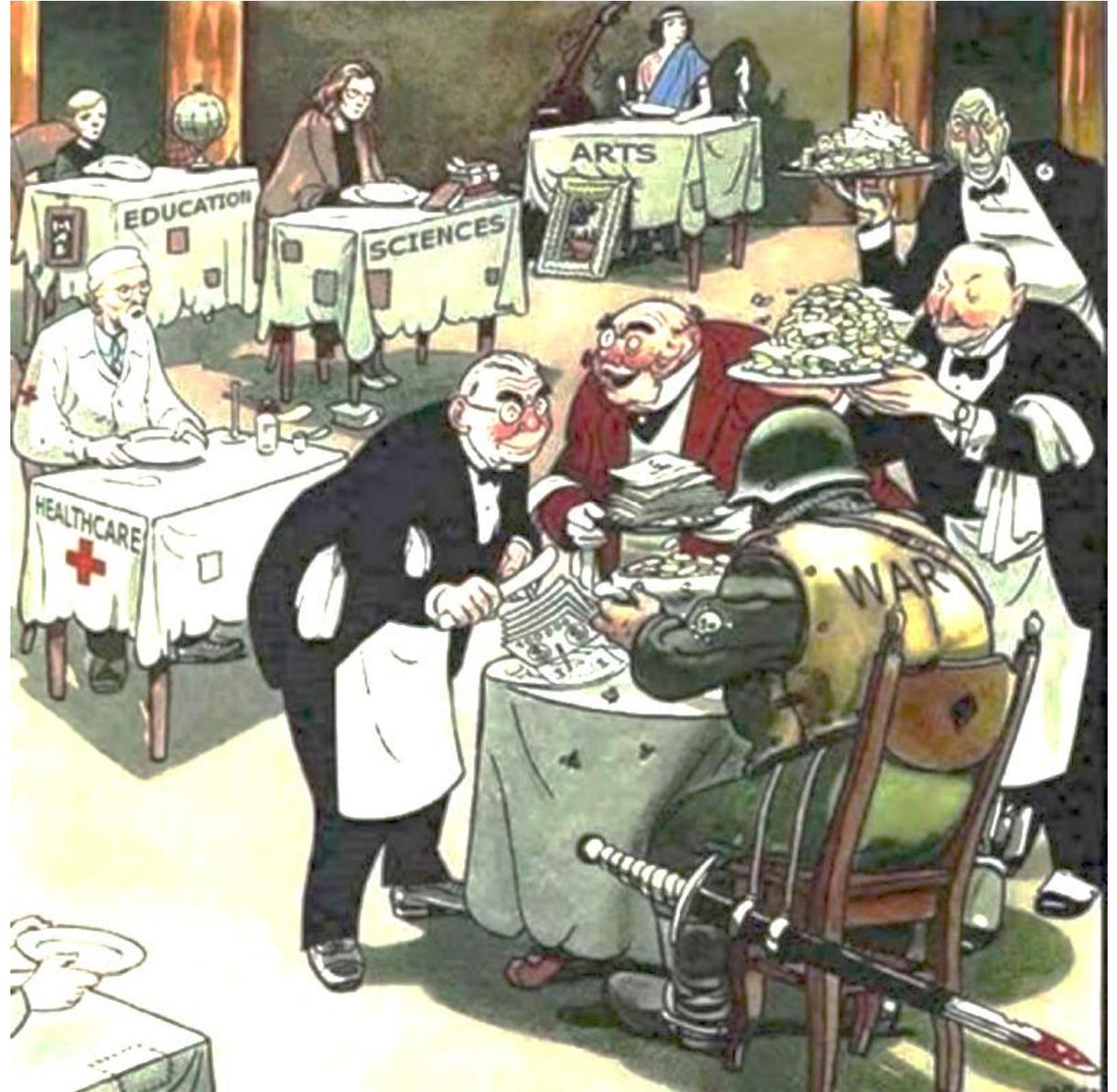
Rod of Asclepius

The Careless Economy: the 'endgame'

Re-arming the EU: €800 billion by 2030

EU4Health: €5.3 billion between 2021 and 2027

US has spent \$8 trillion on wars since 9/11.



What shall we do about it?

‘Might it not be useful to examine other forms of organisation – industrial, domestic or social – in the light of the organisation of the body?’

Walter Cannon 1932

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- Care as quintessential
- Care as attention
- Care as a restorative force
- Care as investment
- Care as unpaid debt
- Care as freedom



Thank you for your attention

