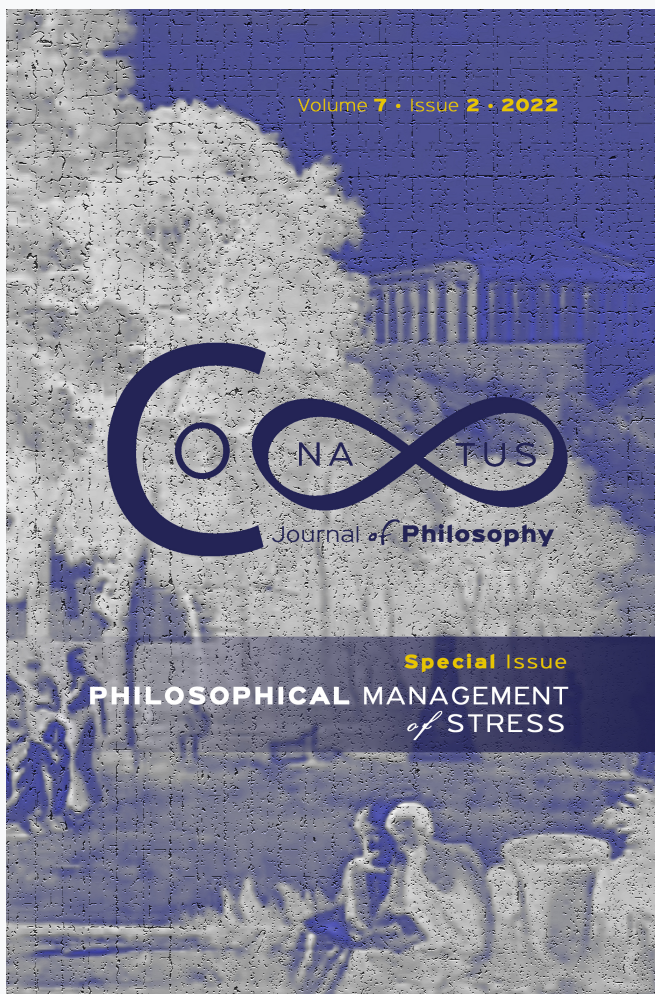


## Conatus - Journal of Philosophy

Vol 7, No 2 (2022)

Conatus - Journal of Philosophy SI: Philosophical Management of Stress



### Care and Empathy as a Crucial Quality for Social Change

*Darija Rupčić Kelam, Ivica Kelam*

doi: [10.12681/cjp.29127](https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.29127)

Copyright © 2022, Darija Rupčić Kelam, Ivica Kelam



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

#### To cite this article:

Rupčić Kelam, D., & Kelam, I. (2022). Care and Empathy as a Crucial Quality for Social Change. *Conatus - Journal of Philosophy*, 7(2), 157-172. <https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.29127>

# Care and Empathy as a Crucial Quality for Social Change

## **Darija Rupčić Kelam**

*Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia*

*E-mail address: drupcic@ffos.hr*

*ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2235-1410>*

## **Ivica Kelam**

*Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia*

*E-mail address: ikelam@foozos.hr*

*ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9087-0314>*

### **Abstract**

*Suppose the contemporary man of the 21<sup>st</sup> century puts under control one of the most significant issues of humankind, like the shortage of food or hunger, epidemics of contagious diseases, and wars. Then remains the question which man first encountered at the dawn of the third millennium; it is a question of what to do with yourself. This question becomes extremely important if we consider biotechnology and information technology's immense growing power. What to do with so much power? Nevertheless, the most obvious question is whether a man has become better and more moral, empathetic and caring than he was. What seems to concern contemporary man includes happiness, divinity, and ultimately his improvement as a moral agent and his immortality. We will try to answer these and many other questions through the paradigm of ethics of care, closely related to the question of empathy. The paper will discuss and highlight empathy and care as crucial means for social change. Therefore, the main aim of such ethics is to alleviate human suffering and anxiety and promote human well-being and happiness. Can care, compassion, and empathy ethics provide us with some answers and become a path to a more moral world?*

**Keywords:** *empathy; ethics of care; human nature; global consciousness; ethical awareness*

## I. Introduction

When we talk about the most urgent issues of contemporary society and humankind, we want to emphasise that they are, as seen by authors like Yuval N. Harari, the following three: climate change, high inequality, and poverty tightly connected with lack and deficiency of care and kind praxis toward Other, nature and Earth in general. Harari asserts that we managed to contain the three problems of ancient and modern society at the dawn of the third millennium: food shortage, epidemics, and wars. Indeed, he claims, in contemporary society, for the first time, more people die of surplus and not from a shortage of food, more people die from diseases related to age and not from infectious diseases, and more people commit suicide than being killed in the war, or by gun.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Harari wondered, what will be left on top of human priority if we finally manage to control hunger, conflicts, and infectious diseases?<sup>2</sup> What will get more attention from us in a healthy and prosperous society? That question is more important if we consider the great new power of biotechnology and IT technology. What will we do with those sources of immense power?

Nevertheless, we would say that this kind of assertion and thesis may sound like an assault or even senselessness and may show a lack of care for those who suffer from hunger and lack of means of subsistence. Billions of people live on the margins, on edge, or below the poverty line.

Harari claims that knowledge is the primary source of wealth and richness.<sup>3</sup> First, however, we ask, what kind of knowledge?

Philosopher Heidegger was sad that we live in a time of Oblivion of Being and utterly meaninglessness. Here, it should be emphasised that the positive sciences, as Heidegger calls them, the ontic sciences or the sciences of being have lost sight of the meaning of being, of the whole being, and consequently, of sense. According to Heidegger, we live in a time of oblivion and absence of the relationship with the human being, and that absence leaves the human being exclusive to the being so that the human being is almost abandoned by that relationship from its truth, its meaning. Heidegger emphasizes the importance of language in which, according to him, the abandonment of meaning and truth occurs, and consequently the possible finding of meaning and truth also occurs in language.

We need a new kind of knowledge, a new paradigm of so-called integrative, orientational knowledge, and a new type of sensitivity, which is bioethical sensibility. To speak of that in bioethics, we can mention

---

<sup>1</sup> Yuval Noah Harari, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow* (London: Vintage, 2017), 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

the paradigm of care and empathy that will be discussed in the following exposition and interpretation. Therefore, this paper highlights the importance of ethics of care and empathy. What is important to note at this point is the related terms of compassion, kindness, and sympathy. Considering the wideness and broadness of the topic, that goes far beyond the domain of this paper, we will emphasise the importance of care and empathy.

The question that will capture our attention is whether a man has become better and more moral, empathetic, and more caring than is assumed. What seems more apparent is that the contemporary man is more concerned with questions of immortality, happiness, and divinity, and ultimately his improvement as a moral agent. We will try to answer these and many other questions in the paper by highlighting the importance of ethics of care. Can care, compassion, and empathy ethics provide us with some answers and become a path to a more moral world?

## II. What are the basic drives of human nature?

The main question from which we will start is the question of human nature in itself. Are we humans inherently selfish and aggressive beings, or are we more likely empathic, tender, and careful? More and more findings present a new interpretation of the history of civilisation by looking at the empathic evolution of the human race and nature and the profound ways it has shaped our development.

Recent discoveries in brain science and child development present new views that challenge us to rethink the long-held belief that humans are, by nature, only aggressive, materialistic, selfish, or self-interested. Instead, the emerging knowledge that we are a fundamentally and inherently empathic species has profound and far-reaching consequences for society.<sup>4</sup>

Maria Sinaci highlights that the most recent challenge to ethicists is represented by moral enhancement, proposed by some as a solution to humanity's severe moral and ethical problems. For example, authors such as Savulescu and Persson argue for the necessity of the moral enhancement of human moral behaviour because people are not psychologically and morally prepared to face contemporary global issues.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, emphasising Sinaci, they affirm the necessity of moral enhancement methods such as pharmaceutical products, neurostimulation, genetic editing, and other

---

<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Rifkin, *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ingmar Persson, and Julian Savulescu, *Unit for the Future. The Need for Moral Enhancement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Ingmar Persson, and Julian Savulescu, "Getting Moral Enhancement Right: The Desirability of Moral Bioenhancement," *Bioethics* 27 (2013): 124-131.

biological processes that can be used. Generally, there is hope among those who support moral enhancement that new biotechnologies could contribute to reasoning, increase of pro-social behaviour and empathy, and strengthen moral virtues.<sup>6</sup>

The ethical and philosophical implications, which appeared within the context of scientific discoveries such as neurobiology, neuropsychology, neurosociology, neurosciences, pharmacology, and medical biotechnologies, according to Sinaci, led to the birth of a new field of science, namely neuroethics. This term was initially used to indicate ethical aspects present in clinical neurology and brain research. Neuroethics investigates empirically the biological basis of ethical thought and behaviour, how it can be interpreted and influence ethical theory, and how the brain generates thought and moral action. In addition, it explains philosophical notions such as the basics of human nature, free will, personal identity, intentions, altruism, empathy, and value judgment.

For example, Karim Jebari understands moral enhancement as an improvement of empathy.<sup>7</sup> Persson and Savulescu consider that moral enhancement encompasses several factors, such as emotions, empathy, and reasoning.<sup>8</sup>

### III. Empathy and sympathy

That led us to the first crucial question of this paper: the question of empathy. We ask, is there a biological basis for morality? Is human nature inherently good, ethical and moral, or has it become one? Contemporary research exploring the connections between the brain and morality proves that the idea of a biological basis of morality has to be considered, as Aristotle and Epicurus taught, by observing human nature.<sup>9</sup>

Patricia Churchland is the most prominent supporter of the idea that morality is rooted in the biology of the brain. She aims to demonstrate that

---

<sup>6</sup> Maria Sinaci, "Neuroethics and Moral Enhancement: The Path to a Moral World?" in *Ethics of Emerging Biotechnologies: From Educating the Young to Engineering Posthumans*, eds. Maria Sinaci, and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (New York: Trident Publishing, 2018), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Karim Jebari, "What to Enhance: Behaviour, Emotion or Disposition?" *Neuroethics* 7, no. 3 (2014): 253-261.

<sup>8</sup> Ingmar Persson, and Julian Savulescu, "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (2008): 162-177.

<sup>9</sup> Toni Fitzpatrick, "The Nature of Nature: Aristotle versus Epicurus," in *International Handbook on Social Policy and the Environment*, ed. Toni Fitzpatrick (Cheltenham, and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2014), 419-450; Christos Yapijakis, "Ancestral Concepts of Human Genetics and Molecular Medicine in Epicurean Philosophy," in *History of Human Genetics: Aspects of Its Development and Global Perspectives*, eds. Heike I. Petermann, Peter S. Harper, and Susanne Doetz (Cham: Springer, 2017), 41-57.

morality is not innate, universal or a matter of appealing to a higher authority, be it God or Reason. Instead, the brain has evolved to “value” attachment, bonding, and trust. These values tighten and confirm social ties because that is the best way for the species to survive. She argues that morality is formed in a neurobiological frame that was submitted and designed through evolutionary and cultural processes, shaped by the local ecology, and modified by cultural developments through interconnected cerebral processes, eventually leading to moral behaviour.<sup>10</sup>

According to Sinaci, the dimensions of this neurobiological frame are the following: care, which is rooted in biological attachment towards family and closest friends – in addition, recognising psychological states, empathy and emotional intelligence, resolving issues in a social context, and learning social practices.

However, what is empathy? Jeremy Rifkin emphasises that the paradoxical relationship between empathy and entropy is at the very core of the human narrative. As he suggests:

The irony is that our growing empathic awareness has been made possible by ever-greater consumption of the Earth’s energy and other resources, resulting in a dramatic deterioration of the health of the planet.<sup>11</sup>

What does this mean? Resolving the empathy-entropy paradox would probably be the final test of our species’ ability to survive and flourish on Earth in the future. Therefore, we assume that Rifkin argues that the Age of Empathy is eclipsing the Age of Reason.<sup>12</sup>

The awakening sense of selfhood, or self-aware individuals, brought in by the differentiation process, is crucial to developing and extending empathy, emphasises Rifkin. The more individualized and developed the self is, the greater our unique existence is allowing us to empathise with similar existential feelings in others. Moreover, feelings and understanding of self and needs bring more diverse people together, extend our empathic embrace, and expand human consciousness.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, we ask if this kind of growing empathic consciousness is dimmed and comes too late to address the wide range of global problems of contemporary civilization and to face the existing problems.

---

<sup>10</sup> Patricia S. Churchland, *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality* (Princeton, NJ): Princeton University Press, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Rifkin, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 26.

Empathy is the very means by which we create social life and advance civilisation. The precursor to empathy was the word “sympathy,” which occurred during the European Enlightenment. Necessary to realise, the term “sympathy” was understood multilayered from the very beginnings of Ancient Greek philosophy, especially by observation of human nature by Aristotelians and Epicureans.<sup>14</sup> During the late 15<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the word “sympathy” started to be used in philosophical writings. Adam Smith’s work on moral sentiment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century devoted attention to and highlighted the question of human emotions. Sympathy means feeling sorry for another’s plight.

In the first place, the term *Empathie* in the German language was introduced by Herman Lotze in 1858 as a synonym for the German word *Einführung*. *Empathy* was then coined by Robert Vischer in 1872 and used in German aesthetics. According to Riffkin, the German philosopher and historian Wilhelm Dilthey borrowed the term from aesthetics and the works of Theodor Lipps. They began to use it to describe the mental process by which one person enters into another’s being and comes to know how they feel and think.<sup>15</sup> Mark H. Davis emphasised that in 1909 the American psychologist Edward B. Titchener translated *Einführung* into a new word, “empathy.”<sup>16</sup>

Unlike sympathy, which is more passive, empathy conjures up active engagement. It means the willingness of an observer to become part of another’s experience, to share the feeling of the experience. Empathy is an art of an imaginative leap and the art of walking in someone else’s shoes, understanding of emotions of other beings and using that understanding for channelling one’s behaviours and acts.

#### IV. Empathy and socialization

Neuroscientists have identified an “emphatic circle” composed of ten parts. First, evolutionary biologists have demonstrated that human beings are social animals and have a natural ability for empathy and cooperation. That radical turn in understanding what and who we are has led us to different conceptions and possibilities of realising how to create a better society, organise public life, encourage the wave of new paradigmatic perspectives, and better deal with problems of contemporary civilisation.

<sup>14</sup> William Fortenbaugh, “The Pseudo-Aristotelian Problems on Sympathy,” in *Emotions in the Classical World: Methods, Approaches, and Directions*, eds. Douglas Cairns, and Damien Nelis (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017), 125-142; David Konstan, Diskin Clay, Clarence E. Glad, Johan C. Thom, and James Ware, eds., *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 49.3, 79.9-10.

<sup>15</sup> Edward Bradford Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of Thought Processes* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909).

<sup>16</sup> Mark H. Davis, *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 5.

Generally speaking, the dramatic decline and reduction of empathy in our civilisation, primarily in the USA and Europe, is obviously present during the last ten years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the other side, as it can be seen, the level of narcissistic epidemy is increased, and there is a vast amount of fragmented societies, civil engagement is weaker, and the ideology of free market and neoliberal paradigm is stronger than ever. All of these contribute to reducing empathy and the increase of selfishness and individualistic ideology.

There are distinct moments of the collapse of empathy in the history of our society. The enormous amount of violence and intolerance, poverty and hunger, global warming, and diminishing human rights in the past shows the lack of empathy. Nevertheless, it plays a crucial role in building a just society and warm human relations.

There has been broad interest in the import and impact of empathy on consciousness and social development over the past century. As a result, empathy has become the main topic in fields ranging from medical care to human resources management in the past decade. In addition, the biological discovery of mirror neurons, so-called empathy neurons, established the genetic predisposition for empathetic response across some mammalian realms.<sup>17</sup>

Edward O. Wilson, the Harvard biologist, made a paradigmatic shift and turned upside down centuries of thinking about human nature and its relationship to other animals. In his essay on biophilia, he questioned a Christian utilitarian view of humans given the right to domination over the other species (animals) and the enlightenment cartesian paradigm that animals and living creatures are “soulless automatons,” namely Bacon’s vision of mastering over nature to conquer it.

Wilson argues that human beings have a genetic and innate predisposition to seek empathic affiliation and companionship with other beings and dared to suggest that increasing isolation and loneliness from the rest of nature results in psychological and even physical deprivation with profound consequences for our species.<sup>18</sup>

What does this tell us about human nature? First, Rifkin poses the question of whether it is possible for humans not to be inherently evil or intrinsically self-interested and materialistic. Given this point, human beings are a very different kind of nature, an empathic one. All other drives that we have considered primary, like aggression, violence, selfish behaviour, and acquisitiveness, are secondary drives that flow from repression or denial of our most inner and fundamental nature, a nature to care and nurture.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Rifkin, 14.

<sup>18</sup> Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

<sup>19</sup> Rifkin, 18.



Many of the psychologists of the 1930s and 1940s thought differently than Freud. They ceased to follow his prevailing reflection that socialisation meant repression of basic drives, which he viewed as ultimately self-destructive and antisocial.<sup>20</sup> Instead, Rifkin points out that they argued that children are born with a reality principle to seek affection, companionship, intimacy, and a sense of belonging. The search for belonging is the primary of all needs and drives. However, society often tempers or represses those drives for intimacy and affection, suppressing empathetic strivings to transcend ourselves and serve socially constructive ends. Still, it remains the essential nature of human beings.

However, paradoxically, the reality is that each new, more complex energy-consuming civilisation in history increases the pace, flow, and density of human exchange. Furthermore, an increasingly interdependent social milieu creates more connectivity between people and requires more significant differentiation and individuation in specialised talents, roles, and responsibilities. This process pulls individuals away from the collective tribal “we” to an even more individual “I,” which becomes the path to selfhood.<sup>21</sup> Rifkin points out that this awakening of a sense of selfhood is crucial to developing and extending empathy. Given these points, the more individualised and developed the self is, the higher our sense of our unique, mortal existence and our existential aloneness are. Rifkin highlights that these feelings in ourselves allow us to empathise with similar existential feelings in others.<sup>22</sup>

Can we then talk about the empathic turn and revolution in our society and history that has challenged our highly individualistic, atomistic, and materialistic cultures? Our culture is more reflective and introspective than it is extrospective and oriented towards out. We need a profound cultural turn, personal revolution, the transformation of the connection in society, and radical transformation on a political level. We need a change of power relations inside the society and just power distribution for those marginalised and excluded from decision-making.

Can empathy help us restore society on a political and public level as we have to do on a personal level? Rifkin argues that a heightened empathic sentiment also allows an increasingly individualised population to affiliate with one another in a more interdependent, expanded, and integrated society.<sup>23</sup> Civilisation is the detribalisation of blood ties and the resocialization

---

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

of distinct individuals based on associational ties. Empathy itself makes the conversion and transition of society possible.<sup>24</sup>

#### V. The empathy/entropy dialectic

What does this mean? The convergence of energy and communications revolutions changes profoundly the human condition for good, refigures society, social roles, relationships, human consciousness itself, and how the human brain comprehends reality.<sup>25</sup> Each more sophisticated communications revolution brings together more diverse people in increasingly more expansive and dense social networks. These processes extend our central nervous system, consciousness, and society in general and as a whole. In that way, communications revolutions, in turn, provide an ever more inclusive playing field for empathy to mature and consciousness to expand. That is the so-called empathy/entropy dialectic.<sup>26</sup> Is our consciousness merely a critical tool at the disposal of complex societies to organise survival far away from equilibrium and an entropic state, or are new energy and communications regimes the vehicles that consciousness uses to expand its horizons?

The flow and energy consumption keeps the system in constant flux. Occasionally, the fluctuations become so high that the system cannot adjust, and positive feedback takes over. In a word, the fluctuation feeds off itself and the amplification can easily overwhelm the whole system, which is happening today as civilisation heads to global peak oil production and real-time climate change impacts. As a result, the system would either collapse or reorganise itself. If it can reorganise itself, the new dissipative structure will often exhibit a higher order of complexity and integration. Some scientists believe that increased complexity creates conditions for evolutionary development.<sup>27</sup> However, new voices in the academic community argue that there is more to life's journey than merely surviving and reproducing. They begin their quest by asking an important question. Why do humans engage in ever more complex and interdependent social structures as a way of life?<sup>28</sup>

The more complex and developed a society is, the more significant economic revolution in history occurs, and the more energy consumption is needed. New energy regimes converge with new communications revolutions.

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Leslie A. White, *The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1949), 374.

<sup>26</sup> Rifkin, 37.

<sup>27</sup> Ilya Prigogine, and Isabelle Stengers, *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984).

<sup>28</sup> Rifkin, 39.

Mentioned convergence of energy consumption and communications revolution is what changes human relations, reconfigures society and social roles, changes and expands human consciousness itself and thus changes the human condition forever. Those changes provide an ever more inclusive field for empathy to mature and consciousness to expand.<sup>29</sup> Thus the underlying dialectic of human history is the continuous feedback loop between expanding empathy and increasing entropy.

In further exposition, we will try to explain that it is not just our need to survive and reproduce that has driven this dynamic to ever greater complexity and extension. Instead, beneath all these strivings, the yearning and quest for human needs is something much higher and profoundly different.

To put it in another way, we would say that care, which is at the very roots of empathy, is the first step and precondition to empathy that is much more comprehensive and profoundly richer than care. The most compelling fact is that care is a basic structure of human nature present from the very beginning of human life and existence. When we empathise with another being, there is an unconscious understanding that their very existence, like ours, is fragile, made possible by the continuous flow of energy through their being. In other words, empathetic extension is the awareness of the vulnerability we all share and allows an individual to experience another's plight or condition "as though it were one's own" and that involvement itself also loops back to reinforce and deepen one's sense of selfhood because he has been there himself.<sup>30</sup> For example, philosophers Levinas and Buber call this a primordial ethics, the ethics of appeal and the formation and creation of an "I" through the encounter of Other, through Thou.

Human nature is instead predisposed to affection, care, companionship, sociability, tenderness, and empathic extension at a more fundamental level. In that case, there is the possibility that we might yet escape the empathy/entropy dilemma and dialectical turn. Nevertheless, to put it differently, we need another radical ethical turn and moral action, as we will demonstrate in further exposure.

## VI. The ethics of care

That led us to another important question of this paper: a question of care and, related to that, the ethics of care. As can be seen, the ethics of care and care itself did not occupy philosophers until Carol Gilligan's capital work *In a Different Voice*, in 1982.<sup>31</sup> Generally speaking, her work has significantly impacted philosophy since then. For this reason, philosophers started to talk

---

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>31</sup> Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1982).

again about the emotional grounds of morality, care, and emotions, not just justice and reason. Significantly, ethics of care addresses the existing asymmetries in power. Ethics of care has the potential to become global ethics that must address differences and exclusions. We would correctly argue that it must address differences by seeing them as constituted in and through relationships. The era of globalisation and neoliberal paradigm is indeed one that is characterised by new connections and profound interdependence on one side.

Nevertheless, the era of globalisation and neoliberal paradigm is profoundly individualistic, selfish and distanced, characterised by radical differences, perceptions of differences affected by power relations and patterns of exclusion.<sup>32</sup> The new ethics for such an era cannot remain at a distance, adopt a “view from outside,” or remain behind. An era of global interdependence demands relational ethics, which places the highest value on promoting, restoring, or creating good social and personal relations and prioritises the needs and concerns of “concrete” rather than “generalisable” others.<sup>33</sup> A moral response is not merely a rational act of will but an ability to focus on another and recognise the other as genuine. Such recognition is neither natural nor social but emerges from connections and attachments.<sup>34</sup>

We need a genuine and profound “relational turn” that focuses on the “interpersonal and social contexts in which these and all other human relations occur.”<sup>35</sup> All things considered, the ethics of care can give others a different voice than those who cannot speak for themselves.

Virginia Held emphasises that ethics of justice focuses on questions of fairness, equality, individual rights, freedom, abstract principles, and the consistent application of them. Ethics of care focuses on attentiveness, trust, responsiveness to need, narrative nuance, and cultivating caring relations.<sup>36</sup> Ethics of care sees the interests of others as significantly intertwined rather than merely competing, fostering social bonds and cooperation. These are very different emphases of what morality should consider – both deal with what seems of great moral importance. The implication may be that justice and care should not be separated into different ethics but intertwined and connected.

---

<sup>32</sup> Fiona Robinson, *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Jenny Edkins, “Legality with Vengeance: Famines and Humanitarian Relief in ‘Complex Emergencies,’” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1996): 573.

<sup>36</sup> Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 15.

In dominant moral theories of the ethics of justice, the values of equality, impartiality, fair distribution, and noninterference are the priority, individual rights are protected, impartial judgments are arrived at, and equal treatment is sought. On the contrary, Held emphasises that the ethics of care, the values of trust, solidarity, mutual concern, and empathetic responsiveness have priority, relationships are cultivated, needs are responded to, and sensitivity is the primary practice.<sup>37</sup>

Demiut Bubeck highlights and “endorses the ethics of care as a system of concepts, values, and ideas, arising from the practice of care as an organic part of this practice and responding to its material requirements, notably the meeting of needs.”<sup>38</sup>

Ethics of care and ethics of justice are intertwined, but too much integration will lose sight of these valid differences. An adequate, comprehensive moral theory will have to include insights into both the ethics of care and the ethics of justice. Equitable caring is not necessarily better care, it is fairer caring, and humane justice is not necessarily better justice. It is more caring justice.<sup>39</sup>

The question is still how care and justice are to be intertwined without losing their differing priorities and paradigms in the different realms of society constituting a task always being worked on. Held considers it better to implement and promote care perspectives across continents and the public domain. It is a much more promising way to achieve respect and dissemination of universal human rights than rational recognition.<sup>40</sup> For Held, the argument is straightforward. There can be care without justice, but there can be no justice without care. However, no child or human being would survive without care, and then there would be no persons to respect.<sup>41</sup>

## VII. The social, economic and political relevance of the ethics of care

The main objection to the ethics of care is that it does not provide adequate theoretical resources and ground for dealing with justice issues. However, Sara Ruddick, for example, argues that the ethics of care has relevance in social, economic and political spheres and shows its implications for efforts to achieve peace.<sup>42</sup>

We should be able to see all the deficiencies inside the human relations within society and rethink and reorganise society to be more favourable and hospitable to care, rather than marginalising it.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>38</sup> Demiut Bubeck, *Care, Gender, and Justice* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 11.

<sup>39</sup> Held, *The Ethics of Care*, 16.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1989).

I think that every domain of the public sphere and life needs a transformation in light of the values of care. If we take care seriously, and it becomes the primary concern of society, care would move to the centre of our attention. Instead of being fragmented and abandoning culture to the dictates of the marketplace, we should make it possible for a culture to develop in ways best to enlighten and enrich human life.<sup>43</sup>

Joan Tronto argues for the political implications of the ethics of care, seeing care as a political and moral ideal. She points out that “caring activities are devalued, underpaid, and disproportionately occupied by the relatively powerless in society.”<sup>44</sup>

Consequently, many suppose that the ethics of care is family ethics, confined to the private sphere. However, we argue that the ethics of care and its values are even more fundamental and more relevant to the public life of society than that traditionally relied on. Instead of seeing the corporate sector, military strength and government and law as the most critical segments of society deserving the highest levels of wealth and power, a caring society sees the tasks of raising children, educating its members, satisfying basic human needs and preserving the environment as the most important and necessary sectors. The ethics of care is not limited to the private sphere of family and personal relations. Instead, we need to focus on and understand its social and political implications, and when that happens, it is a radical ethic calling for a profound restructuring of society. Then the ethics of care should have the resources for dealing with power and violence.<sup>45</sup>

Most defenders and advocates of the universality of the principles of the ethics of care seek the fundamental and universal experience that should be in the foundation of our consideration of the universality and potentiality of the ethics of care. The primary experience is the experience of caring. Every conscious human being has been cared for as a child, sees the value of the care that shaped him or her, and recognises the moral worth of the caring relations that give them a future. “The ethics of care builds on that experience that all persons share, though they have often been unaware of its embedded values and implications.”<sup>46</sup> According to Held, it is becoming apparent that this requires profound changes in how morality is understood, including in international relations and power distribution. We must acknowledge the necessity of

---

<sup>43</sup> Virginia Held, “Shaping Feminist Culture,” in *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society and Politics*, ed. Virginia Held (Chicago, and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 122-134.

<sup>44</sup> Joan C. Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 113.

<sup>45</sup> Held, *The Ethics of Care*, 16.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

rethinking and reconstructing care ethics in the inadequacy of strictly rights-based or justice ethics.

It is obvious how international law has been deeply gendered. Issues traditionally linked to males have been interpreted as general human concerns, whereas women's concerns have been relegated to a particular category, undervalued and marginalised. The public/private distinction and domains were reproduced at the international level to perpetuate and generate different levels and forms of marginalisation and violence against women. In addition, Held emphasizes the merits of feminist moral theorists in pointing out the fact that strictly rights-based or justice ethics is determined by (male) gender, and therefore they reject rights-based or justice ethics and develop ethics of care.<sup>47</sup>

### VIII. Conclusion

What we need is not only transformations of given domains and circumstances that ethics of care requires, domains such as the legal, the economic, the political, the cultural ones within a society, but also a transformation of the relations between such domains and between distributions of power within them in the global context. One of the central concerns of a caring global and comprehensive policy is responsibility for global environmental well-being.<sup>48</sup> Our paper discussed and highlighted the importance of empathy and care as crucial means for this kind of social change. The main aim of such ethics, as we have seen, is to alleviate human suffering and anxiety and promote human well-being and happiness. The globalisation of caring relations would help people of different states and cultures live in peace, respect each other's rights, empathise, care for their environments, and improve their children's lives. As we try to illustrate, the crucial message of this paper is that care, compassion, and empathy ethics can provide us with answers on how to build a more just and moral world.

### References

- Bubeck, Demiut. *Care, Gender, and Justice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Churchland, Patricia S. *Braintrust: What Neuroscience Tells Us about Morality*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Davis, Mark H. *Empathy: A Social Psychological Approach*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1996.

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 166.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

Edkins, Jenny. "Legality with Vengeance: Famines and Humanitarian Relief in 'Complex Emergencies.'" *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25, no. 3 (1996): 547-575.

Fitzpatrick, Toni. "The Nature of Nature: Aristotle versus Epicurus." In *International Handbook on Social Policy and the Environment*, edited by Toni Fitzpatrick, 419-450. Cheltenham, and Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2014.

Fortenbaugh, William. "The Pseudo-Aristotelian Problems on Sympathy." In *Emotions in the Classical World: Methods, Approaches, and Directions*, edited by Douglas Cairns, and Damien Nelis, 125-142. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2017.

Gilligan, Carol. *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1982.

Harari, Yuval Noah. *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*. London: Vintage, 2017.

Held, Virginia. "Shaping Feminist Culture." In *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society and Politics*, edited by Virginia Held, 122-134. Chicago, and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993.

Held, Virginia. *The Ethics of Care: Personal, Political, and Global*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Jebari, Karim. "What to Enhance: Behaviour, Emotion or Disposition?" *Neuroethics* 7, no. 3 (2014): 253-261.

Konstan, David, Diskin Clay, Clarence E. Glad, Johan C. Thom, and James Ware, eds. *Philodemus: On Frank Criticism*. Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998.

Persson, Ingmar, and Julian Savulescu. "Getting Moral Enhancement Right: The Desirability of Moral Bioenhancement." *Bioethics* 27 (2013): 124-131.

Persson, Ingmar, and Julian Savulescu. "The Perils of Cognitive Enhancement and the Urgent Imperative to Enhance the Moral Character of Humanity." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (2008): 162-177.

Persson, Ingmar, and Julian Savulescu. *Unit for the Future. The Need for Moral Enhancement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

Prigogine, Ilya, and Isabelle Stengers. *Order out of Chaos: Man's New Dialogue with Nature*. New York: Bantam Books, 1984.

Rifkin, Jeremy. *The Empathic Civilization: The Race to Global Consciousness in a World in Crisis*. New York: Penguin Books, 2009.



Robinson, Fiona. *Globalizing Care: Ethics, Feminist Theory, and International Relations*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Ruddick, Sara. *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1989.

Sinaci, Maria. "Neuroethics and Moral Enhancement: The Path to a Moral World?" In *Ethics of Emerging Biotechnologies: From Educating the Young to Engineering Posthumans*, edited by Sinaci Maria, and Sorgner Stefan Lorenz, 35-52. New York: Trident Publishing, 2018.

Titchener, Edward Bradford. *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of Thought Processes*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1909.

Tronto, Joan C. *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care*. New York: Routledge, 1993.

White, Leslie A. *The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization*. New York: Grove Press Inc., 1949.

Wilson, Edward O. *Biophilia*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984.

Yapjakis, Christos. "Ancestral Concepts of Human Genetics and Molecular Medicine in Epicurean Philosophy." In *History of Human Genetics: Aspects of Its Development and Global Perspectives*, edited by Heike I. Petermann, Peter S. Harper, and Susanne Doetz, 41-57. Cham: Springer, 2017.