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CARE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE: ACTING WITH COMPASSION[1]

ABSTRACT
The Anthropocene refers to the geological era in which man – anthropos – has become a geophysical force transforming the biosphere. This period is marked by a lack of compassion and understanding of our environments – a total detachment from our biospheric reality. If care is everything we do to repair and maintain this world, what does this process entail in the Anthropocene? This paper addresses the importance of taking *care* seriously. We look at *care* in the Anthropocene and its interconnections with the notions of vulnerability and compassion from both a philosophical and anthropological perspective.

KEYWORDS
vulnerability, *care*, compassion, ethics, Anthropocene

Taking *care* seriously

Humans are needy and vulnerable creatures that rely on one another for physical and emotional support. We all care for someone and require someone's care, which is why we must define *care*. Existence does not maintain itself; it must always be maintained. We cannot maintain ourselves alone in our being, we all are exposed to suffering and death – although unequally, some expositions being socially constructed precarities – we must be maintained permanently, thus the true meaning of subjectivity lies in intersubjectivity. The very act of coming into this world is one of profound dependency, an infant cannot meet a single one of their needs alone, they are entirely dependent on significant others. Later in life, age and illness bring about progressive loss of autonomy

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and increase in dependency on others. *Care* aims at redefining morality from its link with the structural vulnerability of existence, and at criticizing the idea that moral philosophy can be reduced to questions of obligation and choice.

Without *care*, some objects remain unnoticed. To state probably the most notable example – the history of feminism begins precisely with an experience of stepping out of invisibility, an experience of expression, of which the ethics of *care* give a concrete account in its ambition to highlight an ignored, unexpressed dimension of experience. Many scholars consider feminist campaigns to be a main force behind major historical societal changes for women's rights, particularly in the West, where they are near-universally credited with achieving women's suffrage, gender-neutral language, reproductive rights for women (including access to contraceptives and abortion), and the right to enter into contracts and own property.

> Only when we stop reducing the conduct of public affairs to a simple question of domination, can the original characteristics of human problems appear, or rather reappear, in all their authentic diversity. (Arendt 1972: 14)

The relational key of the *care* ontology is that the unity of being is relation, so that it necessarily opens to the duality of what it links. Thus, maintaining an asymmetric relationship at times (such as the doctor patient one) but removing domination from the relation and instead connecting in our common vulnerability. With this in mind, *care* could also be considered as a momentary relationship based on the recognition of others, a paradoxical social relationship which achieves equality in the form of recognition of our human condition, in its dual dimension, both social (humans are social beings inextricably linked to one another) and existential (all individually confronted to varying degrees of suffering). Consequently, giving value to the vulnerability and mortality that we have all received in common. It is an ethic of corporeality, of proximity, a call from the body. A body that is always situated in relation to the world, and a consciousness inextricably involved in the body and the physical world.

Care is thus far from being a regional theme of philosophy (Laugier 2009, Ferrarese 2018) and anthropology (Alber, Drotbohm 2015; Fassin 2011; Kleinman 1999; Martin 2013; Ticktin 2011). The current paper is founded on the notion of *care*; however, it remains challenging to come to an agreement of what *care* is, how it manifests itself in action, and even harder to turn it into a political tool. The various definitions of *care*, as well as the concepts that are connected to and intertwined with it – compassion, benevolence, pity, and empathy – enable us to free *care* from a perception that confines it to the realms of feminism, precariousness, or the private sphere, and to insist on its universality. We might also embrace a broad, expansive definition that aims to take *care* seriously as an essential component of living a good life.

History and Metamorphosis of the Concept of Compassion

Compassion is one of the most discussed ideas by thinkers since ancient times. For example, the Confucian philosopher Mencius argues that the primordial virtue of benevolence (*ren*) is the compassion one can feel for the distress of others, which he says makes it a fundamental feeling of virtue. Aristotle, for his part, in chapter viii of Book II of the Rhetoric, speaks of ἔλεος – a word sometimes translated as "pity", sometimes as "compassion" – which refers to the grief aroused by being confronted with the misfortune or affliction of people who have not earned it:

> Compassion is an unpleasant feeling one experiences at the sight of a destructive or unpleasant evil, which befalls someone who does not deserve it – an evil which one may expect to suffer, oneself or one's own, as that evil appears near. (Audi 2008:188)

However, as Jean-Claude Milner (Milner 2007) and then Paul Audi (Audi 2008) have pointed out, in the context of the time, the field of compassion is far from covering that of the universal – at least as understood in the modern sense of the term, which incorporates plurality and the many as constituent elements. According to Milner and Audi (Milner 2007; Audi 2008), it is in the imperial logic of Alexander the Great as well as in the foundation of the Catholic Church that one could find the anchoring of the universal in "the many", and consequently the universalization of compassion in the minds.

> Against the explicit teachings of Aristotle, Alexander imposed the idea that all the men, Greeks and Barbarians, share the same community of nature; this community must be understood as a kinship in the strict sense: the human beings are brothers, in the exact measure where they are, in last resort, born of the same natural father, who is the Cosmos. (Milner 2007: 82)

From this imperial logic, it is without question that Christianity – a proselytizing religion, unlike Judaism – benefited from the conquest of the greatest number. Conquest – even in its most bloody manifestations – implies the highlighting and valorization of a conception of the world which integrates into its definition the very large number and the indeterminate.

On the path that leads from this break in Hellenism caused by imperial logic to the universalization of compassion, four stages have been historically decisive: 1) the emergence of Christianity, and especially the intellectual influence of St. Paul; 2) the humanism of the Renaissance, where the value of "human dignity" is recognized; 3) the revolution in the physical sciences, which substitutes, according to the remarkable formula of Alexandre Koyré (Koyré 1968), the "infinite universe for the closed world"; 4) the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which finally enshrines the brotherhood of men through their presumed equality (Audi 2008: 185–202).

Faced with religious decline as well as with the advances of critical reason and the free spirit that the eighteenth century experienced, the fundamental

reflection consists in knowing how, in such a context, to avoid the anomie of a society where individuals will soon be "free and equal" and to maintain a social bond. Sociability, closely associated with civility – which appeared and developed at the beginning of the sixteenth century – thus became the object of a reflection that would not cease to mobilize eighteenth-century thinkers and would be at the genesis of all questioning on compassion, from Adam Smith to Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Behind this approach lies a marked interest in the attributes necessary for the proper functioning of secular society, and even a questioning of its foundations, such as social virtues, human nature, and the idea of humanity itself. An intention to find the rules of natural law from the fundamental principles of human nature.

As Hannah Arendt notes in her essay *On Revolution*, it was not until the Enlightenment that these issues entered the realm of politics:

> [I]t is by no means self-evident that the spectacle of misery arouses pity; even throughout the centuries when the Christian religion of mercy determined the moral criteria of Western civilization, compassion operated outside the political realm and often outside the established hierarchy of the Church. (Arendt 1990: 70–71)

Although it is as old as the human world, it is therefore thanks to the minds of the eighteenth century that the love of equality, the rejection of privilege, has taken on more than a psychological dimension, and that compassion has become an active political concept – reaching its apogee in the French Revolution – as well as the fundamentally profane category we know today. For example, for Robespierre, it was obvious that the only force that could and should unite the different classes of society into one nation was the compassion of those who did not suffer with those who were unhappy, of the better-off classes with the people. The goodness of man in the state of nature had become self-evident to Rousseau, for he saw compassion as the most natural human response to the suffering of others, and thus the very foundation of any genuinely "natural" human relationship (Arendt 1990: 79–80).

Historically, society has always relied on various institutions such as charity, asylum, mutual aid, assistance, volunteering, and on feelings such as pity, care, generosity, empathy, fraternity, altruism, etc., to help people in situations of deprivation, vulnerability, suffering and social exclusion, i.e. people in a position of discordance with the dominant social norms (Dorvil. Marzano-Poitras 2018: 195–204).

According to Claudine Haroche (Haroche 1992: 11–25), since the 18th century, compassion – based on a desire for equality – has represented the republican will to eliminate discrimination and to make up for weaknesses in order to give birth to and cultivate sensitivity to the other, and even to maintain social ties. In modern countries, one only becomes a nominal citizen by showing love for one's fellow man, by helping the less fortunate: by feeling compassion. It is also a key notion of republican civility, and its learning is an essential foundation

of the moral education of the citizen. From then on, compassion affects not only collective life but also the personal, intimate, psychological, and emotional life of the citizen and gives rise to legislation and a policy of solidarity (from the solidarity movement of the 19th century to the welfare state of the 20th century, which generalizes the social protection system).

Compassion has begun to take root in contemporary politics, particularly with the prevalence of humanitarianism as an alternative mode of action in the face of the inability of nation-states to deal with new global challenges – linked, among other things, to climate change, migration issues and new forms of armed conflict. This presence of compassion on today's socio-political scene also owes much to the emergence of care and "taking care" as a philosophy of a new relationship to the world, based on vulnerability, making the relationship to the other the nexus of social life, making social suffering a way of expressing the difficulty of living in society at the same time as a new paradigm of social intervention. The *good life*, vulnerability and the commons are becoming privileged themes of contemporary ethical, social and political debate.

Compassion teaches us that, in the tension between equality and inequality, the common world, the "social bond", is not given once and for all, but is to be reconquered, repaired and protected permanently. Thinking the "social bond", if it remains critical, by emancipating itself from conformism, is not condemned to exclude social conflictuality, it can even make it the driving force of the dynamics of the "social bond". Thus, the radical interrogation on the possibilities of the "social link" and its modalities participate in the maintenance of the fragile existence of the "social link".

Consequently, attention to the particular and phenomenological analyses will complement a classical critique of structural domination to enrich it with a better understanding of everyday, ordinary suffering. Finally, the experience of compassion can shake up for a moment the structural places of the dominant and the dominated, for example between the one who, endowed with economic and cultural resources, is addressed in the street and the homeless person, destitute, who calls out. The former may thus feel a sense of guilt and responsibility. The "dominant" then tends to be called upon to serve the "dominated". And the debt of the "dominant" towards the "dominated" seems, for a moment, to open up in an infinite way.

The Ethics of Care – Philosophical Readings of Care and Compassion

The ethics of *care* is an approach to morality that focuses on the moral salience of responsibilities to particular, concrete others and the relationships and connections from which they arise and is based on the universal experience of caring and being cared for. It is rooted in the act of caring for others and designates both an informal relationship – a concern for solidarity and compassion towards one's loved ones – and a formal one – a way of rethinking the sum of human relationships, hierarchical relationships, and social protection.

It is what unites us, a fundamental feeling that precedes all socially constructed identifications.

While the philosophical tradition separates the mind from the body, the ethics of *care* insists on the unity of this experience, while recognizing that it is subjective, even intersubjective. The point of view according to which the body, the emotions, all that is subjective would-be dubious and uncertain, traverses the entire Western philosophical tradition. Giving back dignity to the material body, would require leaving aside this Cartesian dualism, in order to be able to demonstrate that morality exists and should exist because we are above all living, sensitive and incarnated beings, and not because we inherited it from the ideas of the Enlightenment.

The history of Western philosophy has been very concerned with the end, with death, but where do we begin? In the body of a woman – from *rahamim*, the trembling womb of the mother who gives birth. We are first and foremost a vulnerable and dependent body, made of bodies, of others, of each other. The reality of the body, of the face-to-face, of the face of the Other, always reminds us of this original condition. Our birth thus constitutes the first act of hospitality, not psychological, but existential, ontological: we come from another, we are carried, in our very constitution, by a mother. In this case, the first experience of hospitality comes with birth. It is the very condition of life. On the other hand, we are beings promised to death, and hospitality, in the face of this, reminds us that we are mortal beings, that our finitude makes us mere passers-by here below.

The ethics of *care* also reflect an attempt to rewrite philosophy's history in order to sustain the test of corporeity, by articulating the social and the biological, the ordinary and the theoretical. The rise of the concept of *care* today in various contexts shapes the outlines of a new type of attention to the human, as vulnerable, exposed, and caught in new relationships and connections, brought to light by compassion experienced and articulated in the face of vulnerability. This focus has been heightened by the increased mediatization of natural and/or human disasters. Humanitarianism and humanitarian interventions are a key point where anthropological readings interject into the debate on *care*.

Anthropological Readings of Care and Compassion

Anthropologists approach care through the lens of practice rather than ethics. Caring as a practice is a central aspect of both social stability and social change, therefore crucial to social organization (Thelen 2015) and social reproduction. When looking at *care* through a feminist lens, the focus is on unpaid carework and to some extent paid (elder, child and domestic) care work for Others (Hochschild 2015; Lutz, Palenga-Möllenbeck 2012; Martin 2013; Parreñas 2000; Thelen 2015). Contemporary anthropologists, especially in France, are taking a closer look at the regimes of *care* (Ticktin 2011) that can at the same time present compassion and repression (Fassin 2011). What bodies evoke compassion and what bodies evoke fear and distrust? Who counts

as innocent, deserving and in need of *care*? These are some of the central anthropological questions around how in practice the philosophical concepts of *care* and compassion are played out. Ticktin (Ticktin 2011) describes the working of various "regimes of care" as sets of regulated discourses and practices grounded on the moral imperative to relieve suffering. This approach takes us from thinking not just about the ethic but also the (anti)politics of *care* that can along with compassion and vulnerability also be accompanied by policing, repression, and surveillance. In this lens we view humanitarianism as an industry designed to administer aid to those deemed as worthy instead of humanitarianism as rooted in the term humanity.

However, this awareness of our shared humanity, based on the universal certainty of finitude, is not enough. Indeed, it opens the way to a cosmopolitical ethic only if this certainty translates into a compassionate relation to the Other as to oneself. If the certainty of finitude creates the necessary conditions for the experience of a shared humanity, only compassion can be the basis of an active ethic, an ethic and politics of *care*. Thus, we could rely on the feelings of *care* and compassion to create actions and new practices, to bring answers and to envisage a policy of non-violence, in order to avoid any entry into the vicious circle of hatred and to overcome any feeling of resignation especially now in the Anthropocene.

The Crisis of the Intelligibility of the World

The Anthropocene refers to the geological era that we entered two hundred years ago and since which man – *anthropos* – has become a geophysical force transforming the biosphere. Why is this concept important to us? Because it closes the philosophical period opened by Cartesianism, which inspired the industrial revolution, a period during which we were able to believe in the idea of unrestrained progress. Because the whole history of Western philosophy is marked by a certain anthropocentrism. And finally, because in a way, this period is marked by a lack of compassion and understanding of our environments – a total detachment from our biospheric reality.

The whole history of Western thought is marked by a posture of detachment from Nature, from our bodies, from ourselves, which today is carried out with such violence that it endangers the most fragile beings as well as the rest of us. As long as our relationship with Nature remains based on the idea of separation and domination – we exist independently of Nature, we must master it, become its "master and possessor" – the awareness of the consequences of anthropocentrism will not lead to concrete changes.

This posture is found in a certain way in the relationship that the man of modern Western societies has with his own body. To want to control bodies, nature, "insecurities", to want to freeze the flow of dependence and thus deny the vulnerability inherent in being, can only be the source of more suffering. As long as we remain unable to think and represent the resilient otherness of Nature, that wild part that will never belong to us, as well as the inherent

vulnerability of the human condition, we will not achieve the necessary paradigmatic shift towards an ethics of *care*.

This difficult task should first of all question our understanding of what it is to be human. The Cartesian scientific project, strongly anchored in us, has taught us that it is an all-powerful subjectivity, always seeking to improve its conditions of existence. We thus became dependent on a certain idea of progress, and on an illusion of invincibility. The hope of modernity was to keep away all the vulnerabilities linked to the exposure of human life to Nature, and more recently to the body. Faith in techno-scientific capacities was enough to continue believing that it would solve environmental problems, and transhumanism to overcome vulnerabilities related to the body. The modern subject has thus become a refuge from insecurities linked to the realities of embodying the life of a body. Autonomous, independent and separated from Nature by reason, in control and dominating a passive Nature.

The notion of the *anthropocene* is in fact a double arrogance. The arrogance of the history of modernity, since by extending the idea of Nature to everything that was foreign to it, the *homo occidentalis* of the Renaissance reduced animals, plants and soils, as well as all the socially constructed "Others" (racialized, sexualized Others) to an exploitable environment.

By separating man from Nature, from the reality of his body, from his dependencies and vulnerabilities, man continues to consider that he is everywhere connected with Nature, because he is in charge of it. It is difficult to alter this understanding without opening up another horizon. In other words, it can only be at the price of a rupture, of a radical reimagining of our ways of life.

Thus the *anthropocene* profoundly destabilizes the foundations of Western political philosophy. It is no longer possible to think of man's relationship to Nature in terms of domination. The relationship between Nature and politics being liquefied by the inevitable renaturalization of politics, the idea of the security of space becomes profoundly modified (for example, the geographical space of a nation, delimited by the borders that have long represented a protection – concrete and imaginary), because it has become apparent that space is inseparable from the subject. Since the body is inseparable from the being, so is human vulnerability inseparable from that of the planet we occupy. Would this awareness of our limits and our common ecological precariousness be enough to rediscover our belonging to the same species and the undeniable link that binds us to the whole of the living world? How can we turn this vulnerability into a vector for common action?

The Rediscovery of Vulnerability

In the twentieth century, moral philosophy has often denied the vulnerability inherent in human beings, or, worse, has tried to evacuate it – an impossible task, which ends up turning against itself. Here is where we are today. We have done everything to deny our vulnerability, our fragility, our interdependence, until reaching a point of no return. But we still need to understand the

how and the why of the posture that led us here. How did we manage to deny vulnerability, and with it the vulnerable body?

In the Western philosophical tradition, the body has rarely been thought of as a possible and legitimate starting point for a moral philosophy. Moreover, the becoming-all-powerful of technoscience and the posthumanist dream make the body a "problem" to be solved today. There is in the philosophical tradition an obvious negation of the body and its inevitable vulnerabilities: negation of all that is physical, material and corporeal. This negation is not a given fact, it has a genesis. The analyses to which we are going to devote ourselves here will allow us to see the shadow of the negation of the sensible world and of the bodily life itself. It is against this negation that already Merleau-Ponty stood up by underlining in his *Phenomenology of perception* that the proper body is not a thing, but a means to manifest a sense, to make it exist in the world.

There is, however, a less conventional way of thinking about what the advent of the *anthropocene* means: it consists in questioning the meaning of the human adventure, the reason for this posture. To look to metaphysics for an answer to the questions of our time. What kind of quest would explain the *anthropocene*: would it be a thirst for control, a search for its own plenitude through the domination of the natural world? It is in this that, paradoxically, the *anthropocene* could be the occasion to go beyond the modern Enlightenment conception of the human, which claims an artificial separation of man from Nature, and also beyond our "liquid modernity" (Bauman 1999), dominated by generalized insecurities. For it announces, and in an ostensible way, the end of our certainties, the end of this constructed idea of control, of the detachment from biospheric reality, of the omnipotence of man over Nature, and reminds us of the vulnerability and exposure, often unequal, to risks, which escape the control of individuals, nations and borders (earthquakes, fires, viruses, pollution, etc.), while pointing to the path opened by this same awareness towards the reconciliation of technical progress and the living, towards new possibilities based on the interdependence and fragility of all.

Thus, we could contribute to the revaluation of interdependencies and witness the birth of a society of *care* – defined by Berenice Fisher and Joan Tronto (Fisher, Tronto 1990) as "a generic activity that includes everything we do to maintain, perpetuate and repair our world". It is a society in which the value of interdependence is important. It is built on "positive freedom", recognition, the valuing of the professions of *care*, on a culture of compassion, solidarity, and non-competition. Until now, our Western societies were more oriented towards a so-called "negative" freedom – where freedom was that of the autonomous individual – and towards the idea of unrestrained progress, without any real awareness of our limits. We have thus detached ourselves from the biospheric reality. This crisis, which is also a moral crisis, stems from a misunderstanding of humanity and liberalism, from the valorization of the *maximum* to the detriment of the *optimum* (understood in the sense of something that produces stability, durability and sustainability). The anthropocenic event has pulverized our moral categories, as well as our criteria of moral judgment, because the

effects of man's domination over Nature cannot be understood with the usual categories of political thought. In this sense, it has broken the continuity of Western history, and this break in our tradition is now an accomplished fact.

(Re)claiming the Public Sphere

Care thus unravels the overly ordered partitions that the history of philosophy has sought to freeze: the separation of private and public, of the intimate and the political, of reason and emotion. It is this subversive quality of *care*, which transcends dualisms, that we wanted to explore. The present theoretical moment, agitated by questions as vast as feminism or ecology, calls into question all the distinctions that *care* unravels. A coming back to the present moment through the intermediary of an ethics of *care*, means no longer thinking of such a clear-cut distinction between human worlds and their environment, no longer seeing in the binarity of masculine and feminine a well-defined sharing of social roles. *Care* calls polarities into question through the role-play it encourages.

We wanted to show that *care*, in its political sense, is a game that sets us in motion, that pushes us out of ourselves without putting us in the place of the other. *Care* creates this in-between, this in-between us, which is precisely the domain of politics. In this sense, *care* has nothing to do with the insular and sclerosing empathy that locks us into ourselves instead of connecting us with others. This is not to deny the importance of empathy. Empathy must obviously play a positive role in intimate relationships, as well as in literature, films, the education of an imagination, etc. We have this innate ability to empathically resonate with the other in a more or less spontaneous way. But in social and political relationships, this resonance does not seem to materialize in an obvious way. Thus, an ethics of *care* might be a better guide to action in the world we live in.

An impulse both carnal and spiritual, of understanding intersubjectivity and, through it, transcendence in this same relationship. The major challenge of this article was to make something else of vulnerability, to make it something like "the starting point of a new politics of bodies" that would begin by recognizing human dependence and interdependence – a kind of praise for the recognition of our common vulnerabilities.

We tried to understand the causes of human diversity articulated in dialectic, that of the end or the destination. The political articulation of compassion, which calls for a cosmopolitan ethics. It is no longer a question of describing it in its geographical, anthropological or historical components, nor of explaining its formation, but of questioning the possible organization. What is the meaning of the division of peoples, of the diversity of languages, ethos, religions and customs? Are they insurmountable barriers? Can they be overcome with time and in accordance with an ideal that remains to be defined? It would be necessary to think jointly about belonging to the world, to a world common to all living people, and the sharing of mortality, of the vulnerable body. Nothing is more likely to unite us than this feeling of vulnerability and our finitude,

whatever the differences that divide us. Our vulnerability is what we have most in common, what transcends all social and cultural affiliations. Thus we have rediscovered the constitutive link between ontology and politics through compassion – it is generative of action, and if it is not, it is not true compassion.

Therefore, in searching for compassion, what we have found is actually a certain posture in relation to philosophy and in relation to the world. A way of inhabiting it, of living it, of perceiving it and of understanding it. We have indeed been called to gradually change our perspective, to accept criticism and ambiguities, with the ambition of founding a philosophy of relationship, of experience lived with and for others, as a counterpoint to Kantian abstract cosmopolitanism. So how can we acclimatize our time to what the power of compassion offers us as possible – not only the benevolence towards oneself and others that it implies, but also the spiritual and carnal impulse that animates it?

By making *care* a political concept, we liberate it from the private sphere where it was circumscribed – although the private sphere can be devoid of *care*, as the issue of intimate violence shows. The reclaiming of the public sphere is not about expressing compassion in a public way to make oneself look good. Such theatrical manipulation is common among politicians and does not elicit sympathy. Compassion cannot be just a gesture. The generosity displayed by some carries the danger of devaluing the faculties of others by reducing them to *pathos*, and of reducing the people concerned to their fragility. Consequently, instead of allowing care to be taken, such an (a)political attitude generates exclusion. Reclaiming the public square means bearing witness to the gestures that are already taking place in our public places, allowing compassion to become "eloquent" and to project itself into social relationships by extending its scope towards society as a whole.

Final Remarks

Before concluding, we should recall the hypotheses that are at the origin of this article and thematic number: the hypothesis in the history of philosophy that postulates a forgetting of vulnerability in the majority of moral philosophies of the 20th century, and the philosophical hypothesis that situates the passage from the philosophy of the subject to the philosophy of the relation.

As Paul Gilbert (Gilbert 2005) demonstrates, although Buddhism considers compassion to be a fundamental part of our nature, in the West we have long believed that our deepest nature – our evolved dispositions – cause us to be more ruthless than good. We were raised to believe that human nature is inherently bad, ruthless and competitive. It's easy to see why. The last few millennia have been marked by wars and atrocities: the mass crucifixions of the Romans, the invention of the torture chamber, the Holocaust and Stalinist persecutions are just a few examples of the use of terror by states and religions. Greed has led to slavery, exploitation and enslavement of peoples. Violence, abuse, bullying, and insensitivity in school, work, and home undermine the daily lives of many people, even to the point of self-deprecating judgments that can be

interpreted as rooted in an indifference to self-inflicted pain. Our entertainment, too, is marked by a certain fascination with cruelty: from gladiatorial games to modern Hollywood fantasies, cruelty lurks in everyday imagination. Of course, these forms of entertainment are not characterized by an explicit adherence to cruelty, but by various psychological maneuvers that sanitize our actions and justify them as not cruel, but deserved, legitimate and acceptable, and in so doing raise the threshold of tolerance for the intolerable. The Romans claimed a passion for bravery, glory and contempt for death; today we claim a desire for excitement and thrills.

How then can we understand the basis of our current socialization norms, if we argue that they are not the product of a psychophysiological causal mechanism, the result of a similarity to the other attributable to "human nature", but the consequence of a dominant ideology? How can we accept that they must be based on a sensitivity that is not the affectivity of feelings of sympathy but the affectivity to a moral command?

A feeling of sadness towards another human being; empathy in pain or sorrow; sensitivity to the suffering of others or the capacity to care about the one who suffers, to put oneself in his place in order to better share his pain, to want to contribute to his well-being; love of one's fellow man; empathy which leads to compassion and the sharing of the ills of the other; the affliction one feels at the sight or memory of another's misfortune; an accompaniment or companionship of friendship; an emotion distinct from sadness, distress or love, which encourages one to care for others, to share their suffering as well as to help them out of concern for them; a virtue conferring the ability to see or feel the distress of others and to want to remedy it... These are some of the many interpretative grids of compassion, one of the central notions of the human intellectual imagination – to paraphrase Louis Althusser (Althusser 1998: 49) – having for object this world in the effective forms of its apprehension: those of perception, of social practice, of political action, of the theoretical practice of science, of art, of religion.

The ethics of *care* is not a political credo to be asserted, but a political practice of living together that expresses our link to the world and to others as we intuitively feel it. Our attitudes attest to the relationship that our sensibility has with the world in which it is physically involved in an inseparable way. They question our assumption of responsibility for the world in the light of our individual and collective experiences, of which we are sometimes the actors, sometimes the witnesses. What political compassion can establish is precisely the maintenance of this awareness of a shared humanity. The feeling of shared humanity – to which it is very difficult to give an exact name and definition – which we feel negatively when a catastrophe seizes us with horror, and whose occurrences punctuate our daily lives (terrorist attacks, natural disasters, pandemics), but which cannot last once the fear of the event has dissipated. Nonetheless, *care* extended to the political field is not only momentary, as an impotent response to the event or a catastrophe, it is, on the contrary, the duration of the commitment allowed by the role-playing produced by compassion. The

game, the setting in motion, are the grounds where philosophy and psychoanalysis meet: compassion moves us, it links us to each other, not in the instant of the collective emotion, but like those points of suspension that still link us to each other when life has resumed its course.

With this article, we aimed to demonstrate how a culture of compassion would succeed in transforming our imaginary and our worldview by participating in the dismantling of the individualistic and consumerist ideologies in vogue, and by inciting us to "take *care* seriously and act with compassion".

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Ljiljana Pantović and Zona Zarić

Briga u vreme antropocena: delovanje sa saosećanjem

Apstrakt

Antropocen se odnosi na geološku eru u kojoj je čovek – antropos – postao geofizička sila koja transformiše biosferu. Ovaj period je obeležen nedostatkom saosećanja i razumevanja našeg okruženja – potpuna odvojenost od naše biosferske stvarnosti. Ako je briga sve što činimo da popravljamo i održavamo ovaj svet, šta ovaj proces podrazumeva u antropocenu? Ovaj rad govori o važnosti ozbiljnog promatranja pojma brige. Brigu u antropocenu i njenu povezanost sa pojmovima ranjivosti i saosećanja posmatramo i iz filozofske i iz antropološke perspektive.

Ključne reči: ranjivost, briga, saosećanje, etika, antropocen