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The recognition of vulnerability for an interspecies and intersectional justice based on care

O reconhecimento da vulnerabilidade para uma justiça interespécies e interseccional baseada no cuidado

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Abstract

In this paper, we aim to establish a right to be cared as part of an interspecies and intersectional concept of justice. This approach recognizes vulnerability as an intrinsic characteristic of all living beings, regardless of gender, class, race, capacity, or species. Therefore, vulnerability is considered general, comprehensive, and fundamental to humans and other-than-humans, differently from modern ethical, political, and ontological theories that usually presuppose a paradigm of 'invulnerability,' albeit undeclared. The ideal of invulnerability does not represent the inner condition of living beings but sustains it as a foundation for systems of domination based on hierarchical value dualisms. Acknowledging the vulnerability related to interdependence without rejecting or misrepresenting it, is essential to overcoming these dualisms. Also, it demands recognizing that the distribution of care activities is limited and affects individuals differently depending on their social position, considering race, class, gender, capacity, and species. The right to be cared for due to the vulnerability aims to protect individuals and political minority groups from inequalities and injustices. Beyond negative rights, it requires protective measures imposing care duties on moral agents, social institutions, and the State for which we have proposed an universal interspecies guidelines. To be recognized as someone with moral and political value means having one's vulnerability taken into account. Consequently, not being cared for in one's vulnerability at the right time and to the proper extent, taking singularity and the contextual analysis into consideration so the particularities of the situation and specificities of the individual are adequately addressed, is to be the object of injustice. We conclude that a right to be cared for is part of a pluralistic concept of justice that encompasses an interspecies and intersectional perspective opposing the logic of domination and building the path of the logic of care.

Keywords: Care; Ecofeminism; Intersectionality; Interspecies Justice; Vulnerability.

Resumo

Neste artigo pretendemos estabelecer o direito ao cuidado como parte de um conceito de justiça interespecies e interseccional. Essa abordagem reconhece a vulnerabilidade como uma característica intrínseca a todos os seres vivos, independentemente de gênero, classe, raça, capacidade ou espécie. Portanto, a vulnerabilidade é considerada geral, abrangente e fundamental para os seres humanos e outros que humanos, diferentemente do paradigma da 'invulnerabilidade' pressuposto por teorias éticas, políticas e ontológicas modernas, ainda que de maneira não declarada. O ideal de invulnerabilidade não representa a condição interna dos seres vivos, mas a sustenta como fundamento de sistemas de dominação baseados em dualismos hierárquicos de valores. Reconhecer a vulnerabilidade relacionada à interdependência, sem rejeitá-la ou deturpá-la, é essencial para superar esses dualismos. Isso exige também reconhecer que a distribuição das atividades de cuidado é limitada e afeta os indivíduos de forma diferente consoante a sua posição social, considerando marcadores de grupo como a raça, a classe, o gênero, a capacidade e a espécie. O direito ao cuidado devido à vulnerabilidade visa proteger os indivíduos e os grupos políticos minoritários das desigualdades e injustiças. Para além de direitos negativos, isso exige medidas de proteção que impõem deveres de cuidado aos agentes morais, às instituições sociais e ao Estado, para os quais propomos um guia universal interespecies. Ser reconhecido como alguém com valor moral e político significa ter em conta a sua vulnerabilidade. Por conseguinte, não ser cuidado na sua vulnerabilidade, no momento certo e na medida adequada, tendo em conta a singularidade e a análise contextual para que as particularidades da situação e as especificidades do indivíduo sejam adequadamente atendidas, é ser objeto de injustiça. Concluimos que um direito a ser cuidado faz parte de uma concepção pluralista de justiça que engloba uma perspectiva interespecies e interseccional contrariando a lógica da dominação e construindo o caminho para a lógica do cuidado.

Palavras-chaves: cuidado; Ecofeminismo; Interseccionalidade; Justiça interespecies; Vulnerabilidade.

Introduction

Behind domination, there is a dualistic logic that divides and hierarchizes reality into two groups: those who are like me, not vulnerable and dominant, and those who are different from me, vulnerable and dominated. This dualism is just one facet of the various dualisms that ecofeminist writers have brought to the fore (PLUMWOOD, 1993, WARREN, 2000). To deconstruct this dualistic logic, vulnerability should be understood as a shared status related to interdependence. On the one hand, it can be seen in its most positive aspects, such as an openness to learn, to love, and to be loved, or to be provoked by reality to perceive or create an idea of beauty. On the other hand, it is also important to consider the potential for vulnerability to manifest itself in harmful ways, causing harm to living beings and suffering harm from others.

Recognizing that human beings are vulnerable in both positive and negative ways, and that economic and social conditions can exacerbate this vulnerability¹, various philosophical and sociological approaches place the concept of vulnerability at the center of political, ethical, epistemological and social analysis when it comes to building a better world in which to live. However, the category of vulnerability proposed in this paper goes beyond the human species since vulnerability is a quality shared with animals other-than-humans², which can be positively or negatively vulnerable to the effects of human actions. This conception relies on an interdependent view of the human Self proposed by care ethicists. Gilligan (2011) points out that there is evidence that human beings are relational, with a voice and desire to live in relationships. Furthermore, we build on an ecofeminist assumption that humans and other-than-humans should not be considered opposite sides of a hierarchical and exclusionary dualistic framework - human/animal, human/nature - but must be regarded as interdependent as well. So if we consider it morally and politically necessary to protect humans as they are vulnerable in relationships, compelling us to promote care ethics and politics to protect humans, how can we conceive of a just society when we extend the scope to other forms of life, going beyond anthropocentric views of care and justice?

An intersectional perspective is needed to promote such an extension. The concept of intersectionality refers to a methodology for approaching group issues that places the intersections between 'isms' of domination as central to understanding the various exclusions produced. As Kimberlé Crenshaw (2002) notes, it is crucial to develop analytical frameworks for examining intersectional subordination in order to understand how individuals become particularly vulnerable in specific contexts. With this strategy, it is

- 1 It is also worth mentioning Butler's work on the concept of 'precariousness' in the context of a relational ontology, in which she emphasizes how certain lives are always neglected and only allowed to 'survive' in precarious conditions, even recognizing them as having a right to life. Quoting her: "To say a life is injurable, for instance, or that it can be lost, destroyed, or systematically neglected to the point of death, is to underscore not only the finitude of a life (that death is certain) but also its precariousness (that life requires various social and economic conditions to be met in order to be sustained as a life)" (BUTLER, 2009, 13-14).
- 2 The expression 'other-than-human' is inspired by Marti Kheel (2008, p. 23), who uses it "to avoid reinforcing the conventional dualism that separates humans from the other animals".

gradually possible to unveil the intersection between different systems of oppression and the operational dynamics of intersectional subordination. Consequently, understanding that there is the same logic of domination behind all the 'isms' of domination (sexism, racism, classism, speciesism, etc.) allows us to think of overcoming various forms of oppression also together, insofar as connecting the oppressions reveals the same way of thinking and organizing the world between the ones from 'above' (most powerful, valuable) and the ones from 'below,' subalternized by those who have power. Adams and Gruen (2014, p. 7) add that "[a]nalyzing mutually reinforcing logics of domination and drawing connections between practical implications of power relations has been a core project of ecofeminism, even before the word 'ecofeminism' was coined".

Once this expansion is achieved, building a plural model of justice based on other criteria that imply a notion of inclusive and non-discriminatory justice, also in terms of species, will be necessary. Singularity and vulnerability are presented as the background of this conception, making possible another way of thinking about the relations between humans and other animals. Therefore, this paper aims to establish a right to care as part of an interspecies and intersectional conception of justice.

Vulnerability and the desire for invulnerability

Vulnerability is a general, comprehensive, and fundamental characteristic of living beings. It concerns all individuals of all species, affecting their lives in countless and indispensable ways. In the same way, this is something particular since each experiences their vulnerability differently when positioned within a specific environment and a web of relationships that is their own. Inspired by care ethicists to think on epistemic care in forming knowers, Casey R. Johnson (2023) argues that individuals are 'ineliminably' interdependent, which renders individuals vulnerable to one another. It is not possible to outgrow our interdependence, even as mature adults. So, vulnerability is "both an inevitable facet of the human experience and [...] a place for potential epistemic [and care] benefit." (JOHNSON, 2023, p. 56)

Although referring to the context in which humans are transformed into knowers, we can borrow the idea of ubiquitous interdependence and its correlated fact of vulnerability and extend it to other-than-humans. The vulnerability of other-than-humans can be better understood under the concept of 'Plantationocene', which makes the interference from certain human groups on other humans and non-humans visible. As Ferdinand (2022) posits, the Plantationocene elucidates the violent process of domination by a fraction of humans over other humans and non-humans. This colonial domination, implemented under the 'colonial habitat' and the 'plantations', brought us into the context of climate change, which clearly increases the vulnerability of racialized human groups and the non-human world as well.

Considering the fact of intrinsic vulnerability related to interdependence, the denial of vulnerability can be considered an ethically and politically dangerous practice. It

interferes with the identification and diagnosis of oppressive and violent relationships both among individuals of the human species and between human and non-human animals.

In discussing the ignorance of vulnerability, Erin Gilson provides a definition that is both clearer and less negative than others. According to it, vulnerability is a plastic and ambivalent potential condition that makes several other conditions possible. It is a basic form of openness to be affected, both in harmful and positive or beneficent ways (GILSON, 2011, p. 310). To be vulnerable means to be susceptible to suffering, violence, or harm but also to learn, experience comfort, establish affective bonds, and produce empathy. Many aspects considered as the basis for specific fundamental structures of subjectivity, language, and sociability may be associated with this potential of intersubjective and contingent character.

For Gilson (2011, p. 312), the denial of vulnerability acts as a form of ignorance motivated by the desire - conscious or not - to maintain a particular form of privileged subjectivity in socioeconomic systems such as the Western ones (capitalists): that of the dominant subject, individualistic and consumer of products and natural resources. For this model of the subject, being vulnerable and affected by the actions and presence of other beings represents a failure. What is desirable is the opposite: to control and dominate oneself, nature, society, and the most diverse situations without being shaken or affected by them. The concept of the Plantationocene further develops this analysis by showing that the plantation economy of colonialism consistently denied the dependency of the white European male who implemented the colonial habitat in America in order to explore it in a compulsive and standardized manner. To develop the colonial habitat on Earth, “entire groups of humans and non-humans are subjected to enslavement.” (FERDINAND, 2022, p. 68)

The closure of the self in a posture of invulnerability and intentional ignorance is an ethical and epistemic closure. It is an implicit refusal to perceive that we share vulnerability as a fundamental characteristic with nature and non-human animals and that we are, on its behalf, interconnected in different ways. Likewise, it implies a refusal to perceive our responsibility in destroying nature, the production and maintenance of oppressive situations that exploit the vulnerabilities of the most varied living beings, humans and non-humans, and intensify them by making it pathological. “To deny vulnerability and its inherent relationality is thus also to deny the power of one’s own actions to affect others, to stand as an example for others” (GILSON, 2011, p. 324) and nature.

To summarize, recognizing vulnerability as an intrinsic characteristic of all living beings related to their ‘ineliminably’ interdependence, without denying or misrepresenting it, is essential to overcoming the traditional dualisms that structure society, as discussed in the next section. This is part of a project of justice that does not deny our power (and especially the power of some specific human beings) to affect others, and that seeks to protect individuals, political minority groups, racialized groups, other-than-human beings, and nature as a whole from inequalities and injustices.

Ecofeminist Philosophy: dualisms, the logic of domination and its intersections

In working with an ecofeminist perspective, one of the first questions that can be asked is, after all, what is the relationship between the oppression of women, animals, and nature? Ecofeminist trends, originated both by academic theories and social movements, offer different answers to this question as they speak from different contexts of subjugation and oppression. “Plurality then reflects the contextual aspect of ecofeminisms and the way knowledge is perceived, i.e. without presupposing neutrality, objectivity and abstraction” (KUHNEN; ROSENDO, 2021) Although we can speak about ecofeminisms (in the plural), this approach can be understood “as a multiple set of interconnected theories and practices that embraces animal, environmental, and feminist studies and remains united by the very fundamental categories of its approaches: women, animals, and environment”. Thereby, when conceptualizing ecofeminism, various ecofeminists highlight the connection between women, animals, and nature due to their vulnerability to the direct effects of the same patriarchal oppression system.

Through a philosophical contribution to ecofeminism, Karen Warren (2000) identifies and describes several interconnections between the domination of women, animals, and nature: historical, conceptual, empirical, socioeconomic, linguistic, symbolic and literary, spiritual and religious, epistemological, political, and ethical. All these interconnections reinforce the need to critically analyze the dualisms from which society is structured, especially by breaking the barrier of the species and, from the widening of the circle of morality, to consider morally animals and nature. Although all of them are important to corroborate the need for a close look at the relations between different forms of oppression, the empirical connection explicitly shows this necessity: it is women, along with other groups in vulnerable situations, who suffer more from the problems of environmental conditions (WARREN, 2000). Even though all people may be affected by these problems, there is a juxtaposition of the feminine roles with the environmental issue: it is women and children, for example, who need to walk long distances to fetch water where there is scarcity.

It is also important to note that these women and their children are likely to be racialized. Although ecofeminists brought gender issues to the center of analysis, they did not pay sufficient attention to racial and colonial issues, as Ferdinand (2022) indicates. However, ecofeminist philosopher Ivone Gebara (2024), for example, points to women from the periphery - usually racialized women - as particularly vulnerable to pollution, hunger, and the absence of state environmental policies. Thus, while ecofeminist scholars did not sufficiently address the racial and colonial dimensions, ecofeminists from the South are integrating such considerations into their ecofeminist perspectives. Gebara (2024) identifies the interconnection between the oppression of racialized and poor women and environmental issues. She posits that the violence against women in the periphery is

cross-linked by the lack of drinking water and food (or food with agrochemicals), lack of drainage systems, floods that destroy houses, and so on.

Using gender as an analysis category, the ecofeminist philosophy understands that sexism, speciesism, and other 'isms' of domination (classism, heterosexism, racism, etc.) operate under the same logic of domination based on hierarchically organized value dualisms (WARREN, 2000). This is precisely why the ecofeminist philosophy can contribute to arguments to overcome discrimination and oppression, whether against humans or non-human beings. In addition, intersectionality draws attention to the intercrossing of different forms of oppression that further subalternize racialized people on the underside of dualisms. Nonetheless, intersectionality needs to be broadened beyond the human species, as there are those lower on the value scale among natural landscapes and non-human animals, as claimed by Ferdinand (2022). Although all animals are homogenized in the anthropocentric view, we do not protect their lives equally through environmental laws. Some are considered 'noble' and deserving of protection, while others spend their entire lives in plantation systems exploited for human purposes. In this sense, important questions to include in ecofeminist analysis in order to overcome oppression systems and propose a pluralist perspective of justice are: who are the persons (and where do they live) who suffer the most from the effects of climate change? Which natural landscapes (and where are they located) are the ones that can be destroyed to meet the demands of the colonial project? Which animals (how and where do they live) can be slaughtered to satisfy human interests?

The logic of domination that underlies the injustices that can be identified by answering these questions is part of something larger, which philosopher Karen J. Warren (2000) calls 'oppressive conceptual frameworks', understood as a set of basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and presuppositions that shape and reflect how one sees oneself and the world, functioning as a socially constructed lens from which reality is perceived. They are not intrinsically oppressive, but come to be when they are affected by diverse factors (gender, race/ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, species, etc.). From then on, they are used to explain, maintain, and 'justify' relations of unjustified domination and subordination. Thus, an oppressive conceptual framework of male sexism, for example, aims to 'justify' the subordination of women by men. The conceptual basis of these structures of domination lies in hierarchically organized value dualisms: man/reason/white/colonizer/cis/human/culture on the one hand, and woman/emotion/black/colonized/trans/animal/nature on the other.

Because women (specially racialized ones), nature, and animals are associated with the same side of dualism (the subordinate side), and men (specially white heterosexual man) to the other (the upper side), it is important to think together about the intersections of these 'isms' in order to overcome dichotomies and different forms of domination regardless of the species. However, it is also relevant to be aware of the singularity and vulnerability on the subordinate side (FELIPE, 2014), as well as the possibilities of being more or less negatively affected by the intensification of subordination. Thus, just as sexism and speciesism make sense together, considering that there is an equal logic of

domination that seeks to justify, albeit unjustifiably, the subordination of women and animals, it also makes sense to think of overcoming the 'isms' of domination altogether.

In this sense, an intersectional conception seeks to maintain practical or theoretical coherence in defending women, animals, or other minoritized groups in a more evident situation of vulnerability. To this end, it opposes the privileges of groups guaranteed by patriarchy, colonization, racialization, and the anthropocentric approach. Breaking with the binary logic that hierarchizes and relegates an inferior place to women and animals (as opposed to men and humans, respectively), but also to focus on analyzing the pluralities existing within each minority group, means breaking with the defense of justice only for certain humans or abstractly and universally. Environmental issues are a matter of social justice and it is not possible to discuss environmental change without addressing social change (GAARD, GRUEN, 2005). "[N]ature must be seen as a *political* rather than a descriptive category, a sphere formed from the multiple exclusions of the protagonist-superhero of the western psyche, reason, whose adventures and encounters form the stuff of western intellectual history" (PLUMWOOD, 1993, p. 3, highlight of the original).

Thus, in order to build a path towards a plural conception of justice beyond the limits of the human species, it is necessary to overcome hierarchical dualisms and the logic of domination. This requires attention to how opposite sides of dualisms crossover and subalternate beings on the underside, sometimes intensifying their vulnerability in different ways. Plumwood (1993) suggests that escaping dualism requires a 'non-hierarchical concept of difference', that affirms continuity. Her notion of 'continuity' dialogues with the idea of ubiquitous interdependence, discussed above. Along with this and other strategies, she suggests fighting homogenization "recognising the complexity and diversity of the 'other nations' which have been homogenized and marginalized in their constitution as excluded other, as 'the rest'" (PLUMWOOD, 1993, p. 60). As well as recognize the other as a "center of needs [and] value" (PLUMWOOD, 1993, p. 60). Equally important is the rejection of homogenization and the promotion of the plurality of life forms among humans and other-than-humans (animals as individuals and natural landscapes). To this end, we investigate the contributions of care ethics to overcoming the logic of domination and seek a model of plural justice based on the logic of care.

Care Theories and the logic of care

Over the last few decades, care theories have given way to moral reasoning based on care, which emphasizes the responsibilities involved in relationships and the empathic attention to the needs of the other. Care is recognized as a skill that has historically been limited by gender, as a characteristic generally attributed to women in a patriarchal society, but which can be developed by any human being who recognizes himself as an interdependent individual responsible for attending to others in their vulnerability. However, it is essential to note that the ability to care is also found in other species since individual beings need attention and care to survive and flourish under the particularities of their way of life. In the case of human beings, the ability to care is more comprehensively

practiced, involving the creation of social institutions. Moreover, such an ability takes on ethical and political features, involving questioning what can be expected of human moral agents who fulfill their obligations to care for other humans and nonhumans.

Thus, although historically ascribed to women because of the patriarchal, dualistic, and oppressive structure of society, the obligation to care can be claimed from any moral agent. In other words, when the universality and generality of the condition of 'ineliminably' interdependence and its correlated vulnerability are recognized, implying different care needs, the obligation to care can be claimed from every moral agent, no longer exempting men from the functions of care in the domestic sphere. Continuing to burden only a particular group of moral agents with the responsibility to care - especially women of certain ethnicities/races and social classes - contradicts any attempt to think of an intersectional justice system. Supposing vulnerability is a human and non-human existential condition, there is no way to hold only a group of moral agents responsible for providing the appropriate care to the different vulnerability demands of living beings.

The philosopher Sarah Ruddick (1989), one of the forerunners of the ethics of care, argues that thoughts are formed concerning social practices. These practices are collective activities that distinguish themselves from each other by the objectives that identify them and by the consequent demands made on the professionals committed to those objectives (RUDDICK, 1989). Since the early 1980s, Ruddick has devoted herself to studying the ways of thinking and acting of people involved in caring for and raising children (usually women). For her, the daily activity of caring and acting in response to the demands of beings as fragile as human babies would produce in the agents of this activity specific values, virtues, intellectual capacities, and attitudes, forming a conceptual scheme (a vocabulary and a connection logic) that has 'a unit of reflection, judgment, and emotion' (RUDDICK, 1984, p. 214). Such a unit would give rise to care activities that, in turn, would be defined by the goals targeted by the caregiver and by the demands of the caretaker. For Ruddick (1989, p. 17-18), these demands would be: "to maintain one's life, to be able to develop and receive adequate training to enter and be accepted into the community of which one is a part".

Two decades later, care discussions had already gone beyond the field of ethics and stood in the political arena. Regarding the political aspects of care, the contributions of Daniel Engster (2007) are worth noting. According to him, despite the different formulations found to define care, it is possible to identify three objectives that pervade the vast majority of them: to respond to the basic needs of individuals, to help them survive and function, and to promote the development of their capacities. Caring for other individuals involves being aware of their 'vital biological needs', which are necessities that 'must be met to avoid injury or death'. Such needs include access to safe drinking water, adequate food, clothing, adequate shelter, sufficient rest, a clean environment, primary medical care, damage protection, and others.

Caring for other individuals also involves helping them avoid harm and relieving them of unnecessary or unwanted suffering so that they can survive, develop, and function in society (ENGSTER, 2007, p. 28-29). Also in the case of other-than-human animals, care

involves assistance and prevention of damages, as well as relief of suffering with a view to their flourishing, both for domesticated animals and wild lives. When considering the duty to care for nature, caring implies giving up actions promoting ecosystem and biodiversity destruction.

Although most authors in the field of ethical and political care theories tend to focus on issues related to human interaction, it is possible to think about care in a more intersectional way, including environmental and animal rights issues, as proposed by ecofeminist authors. Just as vulnerability and interdependence are ubiquitous and ineliminable for all living beings, so are the demands to stay alive, to develop, to avoid harm and unnecessary suffering, among others. Ecofeminist care practices include, for instance, “respect for the integrity of *individual* animals, both domestic and wild” (KHEEL, 2019, p. 36, highlight of the original), and a “attentive love” (DONOVAN, 1996, p. 163) directed at the other as a subject whose needs must be acknowledged as distinct, which involves “a sympathetic imaginative construction of another’s reality” (DONOVAN, 1996, p. 152) in order to respond morally appropriately.

All the actions and activities characterized as care practices contribute to the enlargement of a logic of care in society, strengthening resistance to unjust and harmful practices against individual and collective life (ZIRBEL, KUHNEN, 2022). In contrast to the exclusionary hierarchies presupposed by the logic of domination, the logic of care sees all individuals as interconnected and interdependent, and thereby promotes actions contrary to the exploitative, hierarchical-dualist logic reproduced in neoliberal capitalism. As pointed out by Zirbel and Kuhnen (2022), it also confronts the standardized neoliberal subjectivity that encourages selfishness and competition, which are harmful to the maintenance of social bonds and community life. In this sense, care practices represent a potential for individual and collective resistance to the systems of exploitation that underlie social injustice. They also contribute to thinking about policies for a more just society for different subjects and their subjectivities, including the flourishing of animals as individuals and the protection of different socio-environmental landscapes. Thus, we can argue that care practices lead us to act in favor of the right to care of individuals, humans and other-than-humans alike.

Duty to care for and a right to care

Care theories posit that the logic of care can be used to organize interdependence and meet the needs of different living beings. This helps to think of a duty to care and a right to access care based on the notions of interdependence and its correlated vulnerability. As living beings interconnected by the common condition of vulnerability, one can sustain a moral obligation on the part of moral agents, regardless of their gender, to care for the other - human or other-than-human -, and their singularities.

The right to care is essential so that any human and non-human being can have their potentialities developed and flourish according to the characteristics of their species. This right is not restricted to human beings. Also, other forms of life depend on certain

conditions of possibility for them to live. Protecting such conditions is the function of a right to care for living beings, which belongs to the moral agents to implement.

Engster (2007), following a line of argument previously taken by other care thinkers, grounds a universal duty to care to the right of individuals to receive care. He points to the fact that authors such as Goodin (1985), Clement (1996, p. 73-74) and Eva F. Kittay (1999, p. 54-73) have argued that there is a 'duty to care' based on issues of vulnerability and directed toward those who are especially vulnerable to our actions and choices - friends and family. Annette Baier (1985, 1994, 1997, p. 5-7; 29-31), Martha A. Fineman (1995, p.161-162; 2004, p. 47) and Eva Kittay (1999, p. 106-109, 2001, p. 535) have anchored the duty of care in the fact of our deep and inevitable dependence on the care of other humans to become human and reach adulthood, as well as to continue to exist and function in society. To Kittay (2021, p. 535), the duty to care should be understood as "an imperative derivable from universalizing our own understanding that were we in such a situation, helpless and unable to fend for ourselves, we would need care to survive and thrive."

Engster (2007, p. 44) sees Fineman and Kittay's arguments as self-interested and prudential, and that we all have self-interested or prudential reasons to care for others: we will all need care, at some point or another in our lives. As for the equity model, Engster (2007, p. 45) comments that it provides a broader basis than the self-interest model, but limits our duties by attaching them only to those who cooperate with us. His concept of care is built around two central assumptions: "all human beings are dependent on others to develop their basic capacities, and that by being beneficiaries of constant care, individuals become tacitly and logically obligated to take care of others" (ENGSTER, 2007, p. 27). So, "[o]ur duty to care ultimately derives from our nature as dependent creatures who need care from others to survive, develop, and function" (ENGSTER, 2007, p. 50). It is not the possibility of cooperating that creates the right and the duty, but need, dependence, and "the value we place on our lives and our functioning combined with our inevitable dependence on the care of others" (ENGSTER, 2007, p. 53).

The right to care comes from acute dependency, vulnerability, and fragility that all human beings experience at birth, throughout the first decade of life (or more), at different stages of adulthood, and during old age. Not to mention that some people experience this high degree of dependency and vulnerability throughout their lives (as is the case of people with severe mental disabilities). Non-human animals also have states of vulnerability of greater or lesser intensity from birth that remain throughout their lives, according to the characteristics of their species and other factors such as human interference in their habitats. An example is that of wild animals removed from their natural habitats for long periods or very young which can no longer be reintroduced into these spaces and require permanent attention and care for the maintenance of their lives.

Without care, living beings would not be able to survive and lead a decent and worth living existence. For Engster, our actions demonstrate that we value our lives, we want to develop and function properly, just as we want to avoid suffering. It is through care that this becomes possible. Therefore, the duty to take care comes from this relationship between permanent latent vulnerability and dependence to live and develop, the demand

for care that this implies, and the implicit appeal to a norm that makes care morally obligatory. Thus, under penalty of inconsistency or hypocrisy, we cannot agree to the rejection of this norm.

Engster also argues that caring for others is the core of morality. All moral agents have this moral duty and, although Engster (2007) focuses more specifically on issues relating to human societies, it can be said that non-human animals have the right to receive care when they are unable to meet their most relevant needs, especially in the case of domesticated animals or wild animals that had their survival conditions hampered by human exploratory activities and domination of nature. Following this line of thought, it can be argued that care is the core of morality; it extends beyond the human community since other living beings also share those characteristics that underlie the duty to care and the right to be cared for.

Although Engster (2007) does not include in his definition the subject of abuse of power between individuals and groups (which often results in domination and violence), the idea of good care involves the respect for vulnerabilities and dependencies of individuals as well as the engagement in processes to develop their capacities. Oppressive and exploitative practices of humans, animals, and nature as a whole represent the inverse of care. Therefore, an approach centered on the duty and the right to care needs to turn to education and prevention of harmful actions, much more than to correct damages already caused in the relations of interdependence. In general, Kheel (2000) points out that 'savior theories' that only deal with the correction of damages and losses are insufficient for care to become a skill to be developed by all moral agents since they do not question the practices and oppressive relations. In this sense, preventive care is much more concerned with reversing processes and practices that intensify global warming and affect certain human groups and socio-environmental realities more profoundly than with combating their effects on the lives of humans, other-than-human animals, and nature.

The challenge of establishing a moral duty to care is to ensure appropriate and adequate care for the individual needs of living beings, without incurring care errors and perpetuating injustices arising from systems of domination. To practice the duty of care is thus to become aware of and combat privileges to confront systems of oppression of class, race/ethnicity, gender, and species. It is fundamental to protect the subject of morality of different species - with its particularities of care needs tied to varying conditions of vulnerability - from the effects of the maldistribution of care activities inherent to the hierarchical-dualist systems of oppression.

Since individual care cannot ensure that all receive appropriate care, governments and institutions must take responsibility for socially organizing care to reach all subjects to morality - human and other-than-human - without overburdening some groups that historically suffer from the injustices intrinsic to systems of oppression with this obligation. In the context of institutionalized care practices, special attention needs to be given to planning care practices so that standardized models are avoided, preventing the loss of the uniqueness/particularity aspects of the experience of vulnerability and interdependence relationships.

Intersectional and interspecies justice

As part of a proposal in development that seeks a model of intersectional and interspecies justice, we present here the “Universal Interspecies Guidelines for the Right to Care.”³ This is an initial proposal that represents a way - but not the only one - of conceiving a moral right to care that can simultaneously generate demands beyond negative rights and for positive rights to care to prevent the injustices linked to the irresponsibility of individuals as well as of the State in attending to the shared and ubiquitous experience of vulnerability of all living beings.

An Universal Interspecies Guidelines for the Right to Care

1) All beings, in their various life forms, equally deserve specific care actions in the form of help, assistance, support, or protection from their vulnerability.

Subsection I: the vulnerability criterion must always be considered in the proposal of care practices.

Subsection II: vulnerability is recognized individually in the case of sentient beings and collectively for non-sentient forms of life, both animal and plant life.

Item a: it is the State’s responsibility to create appropriate legislation to protect fauna and flora, given the possibility of their destruction for trivial economic, political, and industrial reasons.

2) It is also morally appropriate for all moral agents, regardless of their gender, to exercise preventive care, associated with the idea of non-maleficence, *primum non nocere*.

3) Basic care, support, and provision are the primary duties of family arrangements and, failing that, of the state.

Subsection I: it is the responsibility of the State to guarantee the fundamental support of individuals deprived of close care circles so that they can also become future caregivers.

4) It is the right of all caregiver subjects to have access to actions by the State that allow them to develop their potential ability to care adequately.

5) Care-related professions should be encouraged by appropriate remuneration for the importance of the function, being open to all genders and social classes.

Subsection I: [examples of] care-related professions: field of education - teachers, pedagogues, educators, specialists in inclusion of people with disabilities and school employees in general; field of health - nurses, doctors, psychologists, and therapists in general, professionals who work in the

3 This is not a new proposal. A previous version was published in Kuhnen (2018, 2021). Some additions have been made to this version and are highlighted in square brackets [...].

care of the elderly; security field: police officers, delegates, investigators, penitentiary agents, security guards; [animal care field: veterinarians and veterinary specialists (focused on specific areas, such as oncology, cardiology or dermatology), veterinary technicians (assist in procedures, care and treatment), public animal caretakers (who work in sanctuaries or rescue centers, caring for animals in vulnerable situations), people linked to animal shelters (care for abandoned or at-risk animals, helping with responsible adoption), pet sitters; environmental field: biologists, forest rangers, firefighters, ecologists, botanists and other professions].

Subsection II: institutions must take care of caregivers. Professions directly linked to care need redoubled attention to prevent caregivers themselves from being overburdened with caring functions.

6) The uniqueness of care can not be legally specified. It is needed that individuals develop the ability to care for and the awareness of the specific situations they will encounter throughout their lives.

Subsection I: developing and improving the ability to care is a function of the State and the family, aiming to form authentic and exquisite global caregivers.

7) Every moral agent and the State must take care of the environment in its entirety by adopting different strategies to reduce human interference with wildlife.

Subsection I: it is considered to include measures such as reducing drinking water consumption, electricity consumption, sewage treatment, recycling of waste, and the appropriate destination for non-recyclable waste since such measures act in the conditions of the well-being of the life of beings in general, not just humans.

8) Everyone has the right to critical access to different forms of cultural expression in their surroundings to explore their creative potential and develop their aesthetic taste.

Subsection I: providing access to different cultural goods contributes to a careful individual, as it encourages the development of their creative autonomy and the expansion of their expression as a human and multiple subject.

Subsection II: Access to cultural diversity also guarantees the formation of a plural citizen capable of exercising empathy and respect for the culture of others, which are essential conditions for the realization of a democratic, plural, and multicultural state.

9) Each moral agent has the right to constitute their gender [or race/ethnic] identity freely, without being subjected to processes of repression and oppression that interfere with the right to exist entirely.

[Subsection I: It is essential to create environments that promote diversity and inclusion, where different identities are respected and celebrated. Spaces

for open and reflective dialogue can help people express their experiences and recognize the richness of others' plural identities.

Subsection II: it is crucial to address issues of power and privilege, so that all plural voices are heard and valued.]

10) Whenever appropriate and possible, care practices directed to social oppressed groups should be recognized as a moral right and transformed into legal rights if that is the case.

[11) Collective care practices applied to humans or other-than-humans developed by social minorities or socially oppressed groups should be recognized as having special value and preserved by legal guarantees.]

These guidelines are not a document that contains a final and static form; at the same time, it is not intended to make it exhaustive, to the point of concealing any possibility of caring, since such a claim would probably end up assuming the imposition of paradigms of a dominant culture. Such principles should be kept open to interventions resulting from a plural society's pondered and statedly collective needs. What is fundamental is that any changes that may be made have as their primary aim to improve the protection of human beings and non-human life forms according to the recognition of the singularity of their vulnerability, to build a care support network. (Kuhnen, 2018, p. 105-108; 2021, p. 245-247).

In order to move beyond anthropocentric views of care and justice, these initial guidelines help to see how a living being can be acknowledged as having moral and political value. This means recognizing the vulnerability of living beings by taking them as having a right to care. This right requires attention to the diversity of ways of life, as individuals or as communities of life between humans or even interspecies communities, as well as special attention to the singularities of each individual being. In addition, as ecofeminist approaches have shown, some of these beings are subject to intersecting systems of oppression under the logic of domination, which must be confronted through the adoption of care practices.

Although we recognize the limitations of the language of rights and duties in establishing intersectional and interspecies justice, the incorporation of care practices as a fundamental aspect of the guidelines can contribute to the development of a fairer society. However, care practices, as demonstrated by care theories, are not always good when there is insufficient knowledge about the needs and vulnerability of the subject of care. Therefore, the challenge is to ensure that new forms of injustice are not created. To avoid this failure in providing appropriate care to each individual, at the right time and to the proper extent, the intersectional methodology is essential to uncover all forms of pervasive domination and exploitation.

Considering intersectional methodology, the guidelines will be revised and expanded as new forms of injustice are diagnosed. For its part, injustice is committed

when the identified needs of a being are considered less important or are not adequately addressed. To avoid this failure, a contextual analysis which pays attention to individual singularity and the oppression systems at work must be a primary commitment. The response to the situation can then vary, and this is what makes this intersectional and interspecies approach plural in terms of achieving inclusive and non-discriminatory justice. Consequently, not being cared for in one's vulnerability at the right time and to the proper extent, is to be the object of injustice.

The more the social markers crossover and accentuate the vulnerable condition of the being, whether human or other-than-human, the more specific care is needed for it to flourish in its uniqueness. This allows us to draw attention to the unequal effects of climate change, for example, on indigenous peoples and their ways of life. Besides clearly disregarding Guideline 1, not focusing on the specific vulnerabilities generated by the intersection between systems of oppression against these communities and their consequent care needs violates Guideline 8, since it threatens their cultural expression, and Guideline 11, as collective care practices are hallmarks of indigenous peoples' cosmologies.

The issue of unequal distribution of care in the context of climate change impacts is also exemplified by the recent floods that hit the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul in 2024. Racialized people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds were certainly the most affected. Furthermore, other-than-human domesticated animals for the purposes of human companionship were also victims of the disregard for the Guideline 1. It is also worth mentioning the case of factory-farmed animals who have been victims of neglect, many of whom died carried away by the waters. These cases exemplify how lives situated on the underside of hierarchical dualisms of value, whose relations of dependency make them especially vulnerable, are completely neglected by anthropocentric justice systems that are generally inattentive to oppressive intersections.

In a positive sense, the proposed guidelines offer a way of extending the logic of care in a plural society. It seeks to value and strengthen both human and interspecies boundaries when these relationships express responsible care practices that contribute to the flourishing of the beings involved. As part of a more just society, these kinds of attentive and responsible care relations can produce alternative socio-environmental landscapes to the systems of exploitation and domination recently deepened by neoliberalism.

Conclusions

A right to be cared for is part of a pluralistic concept of justice that encompasses an interspecies and intersectional perspective. This right is anchored in the concept of vulnerability as an intrinsic characteristic of all living beings - regardless of gender, class, race, ability or species-, and in the fact that recognizing and addressing this vulnerability is essential to overcoming systems of domination and oppression.

Vulnerability is not only a human experience, but also applies to non-human animals and the natural world. It is closely linked to that of interdependence. All living beings are

interconnected in countless ways and are vulnerable in their relationships in both positive and negative ways.

Western subjectivity tends to deny vulnerability and emphasizes the elimination of dependencies, valuing forms of social organization that produce privilege and power. In this sense, the practice of denying vulnerability and our interdependencies has consequences that include the perpetuation of systems of domination and oppression.

By connecting the domination of women, animals and nature, ecofeminism has made valuable contributions to understanding how the logic of domination underlies these forms of oppression. It provides a framework for developing strategies to overcome intersecting systems of oppression. Additionally, the concept of “Plantationocene” highlights the violent process of domination through colonization by certain human groups over other humans and other-than-humans.

Closely related to the issue of vulnerability and interdependencies, the logic of care was presented and highlighted as necessary also with regard to justice. Since care is a fundamental aspect of morality, it is important to recognize the right to care as a moral and political imperative. In this sense, it is possible to think of a set of guidelines for the right to care, which include the recognition of the vulnerability of all living beings, the importance of preventive care and the need for collective practices of care. A first step in this direction was drawn up in this article.

An intersectional and interspecies approach to justice is of paramount importance in order to recognize the diversity of ways of life and the need for specific practices of care to address the singularity of vulnerabilities of different individuals and communities. This approach is essential to building a more just and equitable society that values the well-being of all living beings.

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