

CARE, RESPONSIBILITY, AND COEXISTENCE

SANDRA LAUGIER

Sandra Laugier

UFR de Philosophie

Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne

sandra.laugier@univ-paris1.fr

ABSTRACT

In this article I contribute to the recent retooling of the philosophical understanding of ethics prompted by the ethics of care. In particular, I shall draw from the way in which the rich tradition of ordinary language philosophy (Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell) understood and put to work the key notions of vulnerability and expressivity, and show its convergence with the ethics of care on the centrality of responsibility and coexistence for the fashioning of a moral life which is at the same time truly autonomous and richly aware of our connectedness with, and dependence on, others. The immediate outcomes of an ethics so reformed are a renewed trust in the capacity to connect with others through our common ordinary need for attention, and the affirmation of the moral primacy of expressivity and affection over intellectuality and rationalizations.

KEYWORDS

Ordinary language philosophy, ethics of care, expressivity, vulnerability, coexistence, autonomy.

As for adopting the ways which the State has provided for remedying the evil, I know not of such ways. They take too much time, and a man's life will be gone. I have other affairs to attend to. I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad.

Thoreau, Civil Disobedience

I want to present the ethics of care as not only attention for others, and to the ordinary work that makes our lives possible, but as a turn in our conceptions of responsibility and of our coexistence with others. I will first present the kind of turn I have tried to operate by defending Ordinary Language Philosophy (OLP) and an ordinary conception of ethics and

vulnerability. Then I will discuss the ethics of care as a change in conceptions of responsibility and of our relation with others.

My work on Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell has meant to open new perspectives in France on the neglected question of the *ordinary*: early on I wanted to show the relevance of ordinary language philosophy for ethical and political issues (e.g. developing an ordinary conception of politics in thinking on civil disobedience and democracy)¹. My aim is to open a systematic exploration of the (theoretical and practical) question of the *ordinary* on the basis of ordinary language philosophy, the «rough ground» of the uses and practices of language – by further investigating the denial or undervaluation of the ordinary in contemporary thought, and by examining concretely the forms in which this undervaluation appears in various bodies of work, philosophical mostly. In order to do this, I am using OLP as a basis for a re-definition of ethics as attention to ordinary life and care for moral expressivity.

1. ORDINARY OTHERS

The meaning of ordinary language philosophy does indeed lie in this recognition that language is used, spoken by a human voice. This sense of language is what the later Wittgenstein means by «form of life»: the question is no longer whether language is an image of reality, but to «come back to earth» and to see the practices in which language is *caught* and which collect around our words. So this makes OLP an alternative political and ethical approach, centered on the vulnerability of language.

When we examine what we should say when, what words we should use in what situations, we are looking again not *merely* at words (or »meanings») but also at the realities we use the words to talk about: we are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of, though not as the final arbiter of, the phenomena².

This awareness is responsibility for what we say – this tangible relation we have to our words is something that connects OLP to the general question of sensibility to words. This is how OLP led me to two main directions of thought involving gender and feminism, attention to women's voices: women's ordinary

¹ A. Ogien and S. Laugier, *Pourquoi désobéir en démocratie?*, Paris, La Découverte, 2010; Id., *Le principe démocratie. Enquête sur les nouvelles formes du politique*, Paris, La Découverte, 2014.

² J.L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1962, p 182.

expressiveness, and the ethics of care which was at the outset a claim for the validity of women's voice, for a different voice³.

It is one of Austin's intuitions: we must not concern ourselves only with the analysis of what we say, but with the *we* and with the *should* and the *say*. Cavell's *Must We Mean What We Say?*⁴ was the first work to ask the question of the relevance of our statements as relevance in relation to ourselves. This new (heterodox) notion of relevance is responsibility for language. The content (objective, semantic, or empirical) of propositions is no longer the question, but rather the fortunes and misfortunes of ordinary expression. What matters here then, is the search for (or loss of) the right tone or right word, conceptually, morally, socially, and sensibly. It is a matter of finding the fine sensibility to things and the adjustment of words within ordinary uses and connections. The question is: how can I know if I adequately «project» the words I have learned into new contexts?⁵ There is an «unhappy» dimension, of failure in language traced by OLP, which is obsessed with cases where our words fail, are inadequate, inexpressive, inarticulate.

For Cavell, it is the question of the social contract that underwrites that of agreements in language, as is shown by the spirited analysis of Rousseau that he offers at the opening of *The Claim of Reason*. If I am representative, then I have to have a voice in the common conversation. My society, if it is an expression of me, must also allow me to find my own voice. But as Cavell went on to show, it is not at all obvious. If the others deaden my voice, speaking for me, I might still always seem to have consented. One does not have a voice, *one's own voice*, by nature: I must find my voice if I am to speak for others and they are to speak for me. For if my words are not accepted by these others, I lose my voice.

I do not know in advance how deep my agreement with myself is, how far responsibility for language may run. But if I am to have my own voice in it, I must be speaking for others, and allow others to speak for me. The alternative to speaking for myself representatively is not: speaking for myself privately. The alternative is having nothing to say, being voiceless, not even mute.⁶

To not be public is not to be private, it is to be *inexpressive*. Not even mute, voiceless.

³ C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1982.

⁴ S. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays* (1969), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976.

⁵ S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason. Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979.

⁶ S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason. Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 28.

Introducing the ethics of care in France has been an interesting experience. I meant it as developing a heterodox ethics, inspired by approaches in moral sociology, and moral perfectionism but above all, as a matter of continuing OLP by other means – by re-centering moral philosophy on ordinary language and expressiveness. From this comes the idea of an ethics formulated *in a different voice* and expressed in a female voice. In this ordinary conception of ethics, morality is not founded on universal principles but rather starts from experiences of everyday life and the moral problems of real people in their ordinary lives. The notion of care is best expressed not in the form of a theory, but an activity: for example, care as action (taking care, caring for) and as attention, concern (care about). Care is at once a practical response to specific needs—which are always those of individual, singular others an activity necessary to maintaining persons and connections, work carried out both in the private sphere and in the public sphere, and sensitivity to the «details» that count. Care being a concrete matter, embedded in the ordinary details of human life, ensuring the maintenance (in several senses, including the sense of conversation and conservation) and continuity of the human world. This is the definition of ethics (a paradigm shift) that is deeply connected to attention to, and repossession of, ordinary language, and that transforms the notion of ethics, enhancing the question of human vulnerability and our responsiveness and responsibility.

The (polemical) importance of the ethics of care is that just as OLP does it subverts well-established intellectual and social hierarchies and attracts attention to a number of phenomena that are overlooked because they are connected to the female. It is a matter of showing that the (moral) sentiments of women are not an inferior level of morality, but a moral resource that has been ignored, and which would make it possible to profoundly renew moral and social thought. This is on the condition of seeing care not only as a sensibility but also as an ordinary practice, an ethics defined not by abstract principles but by the concrete work done for the most part by women, and neglected because of it. In fact, taking into consideration the social, moral, and political importance of care makes it necessary to refer to «women», one of the categories to which the work of care has principally been assigned, which has led to it being criticized as «differentialist». We can hope to defend universalism with the critique by care ethics of the incapacity of the language of justice to take into account the ordinary experiences and points of view of women as morally relevant and different. The hypothesis of a «different voice» is indeed that of a moral orientation that identifies and treats moral problems differently than the language of justice and liberal moral philosophy do.

The ethics of care has for me contributed to this transformation of ethics and voice. By proposing to valorize moral values like caring, attention to others, solicitude, the ethics of care has changed deeply the way we look at ethics, or how ethics should look like. It has introduced ethical stakes into politics, weakening, through its critique of theories of justice, the seemingly obvious link between an ethics of justice and political liberalism. Care is a fundamental aspect of human life and consists, as Joan Tronto proposes, of «everything we do to continue, repair, and maintain ourselves so that we can live in the world as well as possible»⁷. It shows the world itself to be vulnerable.

Care corresponds to a quite ordinary reality: the fact that people look after one another, take care of one another, and thus are attentive to the functioning of the world, which depends on this kind of care. Ethics of care affirms the importance of care and attention given to others, in particular to those whose lives and wellbeing depend on particularized, continual, and daily attention: ordinary vulnerable others. Ethics of care draw our attention to the ordinary, to what we are unable to see, but is right before our eyes. An ethics that gives voice and attention to humans that are undervalued precisely because they accomplish unnoticed, invisible tasks, and take care of the basic needs of others.

These ethics are based on an analysis of the historical conditions that have favored a division of moral labor such that activities of care have been socially and morally devalorized. The assignment of women to the domestic sphere has reinforced the exclusion of these activities and preoccupations from the moral domain and the public sphere, reducing them to the rank of private sentiments devoid of moral and political import. The perspectives of care carry with them a fundamental claim concerning the importance of care for human life, for the relations that organize it, and the social and moral position of caregivers. To recognize this means recognizing that dependence and vulnerability are traits of a condition common to all, not of a special category – the «vulnerable». This sort of «ordinary» realism is absent from the majority of social and moral theories, which have a tendency to reduce the activities and preoccupations of care to a concern for victims and for the weak on the part of selfless mothers. Hence the importance of acknowledging the first import of the ethics of care: *the human is vulnerable*.

In the most general sense, care is a species of activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, our

⁷ J. Tronto and B. Fischer, *Toward a Feminist Theory of Caring*, in E. Abel and M. Nelson (eds.), *Circles of Care*, Albany, N.Y., SUNY Press, 1990, p. 41.

environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life sustaining web⁸.

Care proposes bringing ethics back to the level of the «rough ground of the ordinary», the level of everyday life. It is a practical response to specific needs, which are always those of singular others (whether close to us or not), of «the everyday life of the other»; it is work carried out just as much in the private sphere as in public; a commitment not to treat anyone as negligible, a sensibility to the details that matter. It is by giving back a (different) voice to the individual sensibility, to the intimate, that one ensures the conversation/conservation (entretien/entertaining/maintenance) of a human world.

This is obvious in the contexts of catastrophe Veena Das' *Life and Words* accounts for, when violence destroys the everyday and the very sense of *life*⁹.

Measuring the importance of care for human life means recognizing that dependence and vulnerability are not accidents that happen only to «others.» Going against the grain of the ideal of autonomy animating most moral and political theories, care reminds us that we need others in order to satisfy our primordial needs. Basing responsibility both on our connections and needs, instead of autonomy; on responsiveness and capacity to react to others, this is the redefinition of responsibility that is the basis of the ethics of care.

2. RESPONSIVENESS AND VOICE

Carol Gilligan's book, *In a Different Voice* was translated into French as early as 1986, just to be immediately forgotten.¹⁰ It may be the case that the term «*différence*» as it appears in the original French title (*Une si grande différence*) acted as a repulsive force in a country where any difference is to be rejected on the grounds of its alleged incompatibility with the ideal of equality to which feminist theory itself is subjected. The ethics of care as shown by polemics, hits at a sensitive point in the nexus of social and gender relations, especially in France where the main hindrance to legitimating feminism is a universalist background. Polemics about the care issue relate to a general trait of the intellectual and even academic life in France and the refusal to a revised and inclusive conception of justice.

⁸ Ibidem, p. 40.

⁹ V. Das, *Life and Words. Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2007, p. 89.

¹⁰ C. Gilligan, *In a Different Voice*, cit., French trans. A. Kwiatek, *Une si grande différence*, Paris, Flammarion, 1986; C. Gilligan, *Une voix différente*, Paris, Champs, Flammarion, 2008.

This is a crucial, and revolutionary, point in Gilligan's work, as initiated in *In a Different Voice*. The idea that there exist female morals is so provocative, and at the same time so obvious, that its feminist origin is usually silenced. Through this idea, what is asserted is that there exists another form of morals, a different voice, present in every one. The ethics of care, it should be reminded, are based on an analysis of those historical conditions that favored a division of moral labor in which care activities were socially *and* morally depreciated. That women, as is historically established, were assigned to the domestic sphere did reinforce the rejection of those activities and concerns out of the public sphere, which was highly valued by socially superior men and women. The whole domain of domestic activities has thus been surreptitiously undervalued as lacking a proper political and moral scope. The ethics of care therefore appears as contesting the legitimacy of moral, social and political philosophies, in their main practice. The ethics of care, by explicitly asserting that other morals can be envisaged, opened a new field of investigation and speculation where the two moral voices are *equally* put at par: a morals centered on equity, impartiality and autonomy, as has been valued by a whole tradition of thought which is eventually characterized as masculine, on one hand; a morals articulated by a «different voice,» mostly experienced by women, based on the preservation and care of human relations, on the other hand. This latter requires that specific situations be accounted for; a mode of thought more contextual and narrative than formal and abstract.» By insisting on this difference, Gilligan rather aimed at making evident our common prejudices concerning moral issues and how a different voice is silenced inside us. Gilligan's works induced a shift in moral philosophy by contesting the monopoly of abstract justice, as a concept Rawls had installed in the field of morals. Gilligan has clearly shown the generality of her approach: justice and care are two different tonalities, or rival voices, existing inside each of us, the care voice being less inhibited in girls than in boys.

Care and caring are not women's issues; they are human concerns. And until we make explicit the gendered nature of the justice/care debate—we will continue to be mystified by its seeming intransigency. And we will not move forward in dealing with the real questions, namely, how issues of fairness and of rights intersect with issues of care and responsibility.¹¹

One of the main results gained through the ethics of care is that morals have become plural. This is a crucial, and most revolutionary, point in Gilligan's work, as initiated in *In a Different Voice* and carried on in *The*

¹¹ C. Gilligan, *Looking Back to Look Forward: Revisiting In a Different Voice*, Classics@, Issue 9, 2011, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_Classicsat> (accessed 7-22-2016).

*Deepening Darkness*¹². The idea that there exist feminine morals is so provocative, and at the same time so obvious, that its feminist origin is usually silenced. Through this idea, what is asserted is that there exists another form of morals, a different voice, present in every one; this voice is neglected precisely because in the first place and from an empiricist point of view, it is the voice of women referring to activities that appear as feminine because they are usually restricted to women. The ethics of care, it should be reminded, are based on an analysis of those historical conditions that favored a division of moral labor in which care activities were socially *and* morally depreciated. That women, as is historically established, were assigned to the domestic sphere did reinforce the rejection of those activities and concerns out of the public sphere, which was highly valued by socially superior men and women. The whole domain of domestic activities has thus been surreptitiously undervalued as lacking a proper political and moral scope. The ethics of care therefore appears as contesting the legitimacy of moral, social and political philosophies, in their main practice.

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The different-voice's revolution occurs when Gilligan introduces in her account Amy's voice. Amy, as it is becoming well known, is a girl aged 11. She is confronted, along with a boy, Jake, about the same age, to the so-called Heinz's dilemma: either steal some medicine badly needed by Heinz's dying wife or let her die. According to Jake, Heinz should steal the drug: saving his

¹² C. Gilligan, and D. Richards, *The Deepening Darkness: Patriarchy, Resistance, and Democracy's Future*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008.

wife's life must be given first priority; therefore he is *entitled* to robbery. Amy's answer to the dilemma is different, suggesting that there might be other ways out of it, without any robbery; Heinz might borrow money, for instance; not only that, what is the use to Heinz's wife, she argues, if he goes to jail? Heinz must not commit robbery and his wife must not die. Amy suggests that Heinz and his wife talk to each other in order to find a solution. Jake and Amy are representative of the view according to ethics of justice and the perspective of the ethics of care, respectively. Amy's moral judgment relies on attention being given to all specificities of the problem. Her worldview is made of interwoven human relations the thread of which builds a coherent whole, and not of isolated independent individuals whose relations are governed by systems of rules. From the dominant ethical point of view, the moral value of Amy's thought is *less* than Jake's – even null. The ethics of care is revolutionary in the sense that it forces us to include in what we judge as moral, in the morals itself, in the heart of it, such a voice as Amy's. The ethics of care claims that the two voices, Amy's and Jake's, should stand on the same equal footing. Amy's voice, because it sounds (briefly or permanently) in each of us – man and woman –, represents such a provocative claim.

The concept of «care», as one of critical politics, questions the true meaning to be given to morals and politics when grasped by a specific position. Carole Pateman addressed this difficult issue, some years after Gilligan and along a different direction, in a book whose title speaks by itself: *The sexual contract*¹³. Pateman radicalizes and politicizes the idea that is at the basis of the ethics of care – namely that predominant ethics, with their articulation to politics, and more specifically to past and present theories of «contract,» are produced by and express the very idea of «patriarchy,» which uses them as tools in submitting women to its power. Similarly, ethics *and* politics, as they appear in philosophical speculations, are mere translations of social practice in its devaluation of labor and attitudes related to the idea of care – thus restricting the corresponding jobs to women, poor people and migrants in priority. Viewing care as socially, morally and politically important thus implies a reference to «women» as a category to which the labor associated with care has been specifically restricted and assigned. Since speaking of «women» means introducing a suspected category (as is any theory assuming that such a category does exist), Gilligan's approach was easily considered as «essentialist.» The mere immediacy of such a characterization does in itself point to the existence of prejudices impeaching any critical thought on the predominant character of the common view on morals.

¹³ C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1988.

The ethics of care, far from being essentialist, brings us back to such a claim for more realism, in the sense given to this word in Cora Diamond's *The Realistic Spirit*¹⁴, meaning the necessity to see what lies just under one's eyes: the reality of inequalities. Reflections on care brings morals back to its proper domain, that is to say our practice - in the way Wittgenstein wants to bring words from their metaphysical use to their daily use, where they do *mean* something to us. If something like morals exist, then they can be seen not in a set of preexisting numerable rules nor in a moral reality but in the mere immanence of situations, affects and practices. No «care» without the expression of everyone's voice: here lies the *importance* of a different voice. What Gilligan did establish is that the language of justice cannot account for the pertinence of women's experiences and points of view –these experiences and the moral perspectives they produce being disqualified as deficient or marginal. If the possibility that women might be morally deficient is excluded, then the hypotheses that there exists a «different voice» must be taken seriously, along with that of a moral orientation identifying and treating moral problems in another way, different from that implied by the language of justice. Analyses in terms of care are devoted to such an objective of articulation and clarification.

3. SUBVERTING AUTONOMY

Critics of the ethics of care rely on a misinterpretation of the idea of care, thought as allegedly referring to that other idea that women's natural position is one of sacrifice and abnegation. The ethics of care precisely excludes this sort of essentialist view. It is ironic that the ethics of care can be accused of not asserting what it has been really asserting from the beginning, namely equality. Real and true equality, not that theoretical equality that goes with citizenship, for instance. The ethics of care is subverting the predominant way of addressing two important complementary issues: civic equality (women are equal to men by definition of their common status of «citizen» therefore claiming specific rights for women is pointless, since women already have those rights) ; and the so-called «merit» (every citizen of the Republic should be treated according to his or her merits –meaning that women should not be favored as such, no quotas, no positive discrimination since it would go against equal rights for all). As many feminists have asserted, but none so empirically established as Gilligan's, criteria defining what is right or wrong, what should

¹⁴ C. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*, Boston, MIT Press, 1991.

be valued or disdained (criteria for morals and quality), appear under the guise of universalism while they in fact are those of a patriarchal society; they are masculine criteria in the sense that the values they promote are those forged by masculine domination in order to ensure this domination. Gilligan's strength is in her moral epistemology, in exhibiting how much gender oriented our judgments are, when it comes to morals, value and intellectual matters. The ethics of care thus brings feminism back to its origin: equality. One of the problems we have to face in France – the issue is that of inequality among women—is how universalism serves as an argument and a pretext, in order to make feminism compatible with social contempt (I could do it, alone on myself, why should others not be able to do the same?). This argument underlies all sorts of stands (against quotas, against positive discrimination, etc.) often taken by women themselves. As a matter of fact, the question raised by the ethics of care is that unpleasant one of inequalities among women; how to acknowledge it? how to analyze it? Once more, the ethics of care serves as revealing an occulted question. The autonomy gained by some women –those who speak in the name of women—through work and through the increase in possibilities to have children taken care of, was obtained in a masculine way, if I may say so. I mean that this autonomy was gained not by a transfer of domestic charges in the direction of men, nor by an equal share of those, but by putting other women to work, at the service of women. I am not going to indulge in easy ironical words about these women who have become employers, all the more so since they still have the moral and administrative burden, of employing someone at home. I'd rather insist on the fact that once more we have to look at what is just under our eyes: tasks related to care, traditionally handled by women, still exist, even if in our privileged western countries these tasks are handled by others, in as much as we can afford it. The fact that these tasks are undertaken by immigrants just adds to the moral devaluation of the idea of «care.»

The reason why questions related to the ethics of care become part of the «public debate» today has to do with the crisis undergone by traditional ways of «taking care» due to a massive irruption of women in the labor market. In any case, whether provided inside the domestic sphere or by public institutions or by the market, care is nowadays effected by women whose social status is insecure. The crisis in care affects at the same time the traditional care givers, those whose working conditions are more and more arduous due to cuts in social politics and the geographical redistribution of care facilities, in favor of rich countries and to the expense of poor ones.

This is to remind us of the importance of taking into account care and service (delegated work) simultaneously. The social (and global) division of labor related to care being as it is, we can fear activities related to care might be divided in two parts: «emotional care»– affectionate care, an activity for white bourgeois women; and «care as a service,» to be bought and delegated, dirty work to be left to subalterns. Here are the limits of any discourse valuing care: the empowerment of caregivers. The voice that ethics of care has made audible is the voice of all subalterns, all socially disadvantaged categories, ethnicized and racialized, to which the labor of care has been attributed in history.

Care is what makes a common life possible. Standard ethics, and political analysis, when they deal with social contract do not enquire on how such a society is made sustainable, carefully expunging out of ethics the world of fundamental care, and more generally speaking, all those actions that make ordinary social relations possible and alive. Ignoring the care issue in theoretical ethics and politics amounts to ignoring the origin of what makes a society exist and perpetuate.

By calling for a society in which caregivers would have their voice, their relevance, and in which the tasks of care would not be structurally invisible or inconspicuous, they bring to light the difficulty of thinking these social realities.

Recognizing the importance of care would allow us to revalue the contributions made to human societies by the outcasts, by women, by the humble people who work everyday. Once we commit ourselves to remap the world so that their contributions count, then we are able to change the world.¹⁵

Truly carrying out the ethics of care would imply both including practices linked to care in the agenda of democratic reflection and empowering those concerned—care givers and receivers. The recognition of the theoretical pertinence of ethics of care necessarily passes through a practical revalorization of activities linked to care and a joint modification of intellectual and political agendas, defining citizenship through bounds of care and coexistence in one world.

The world of care, needless to say, has generally been ignored by social and political theorists. The world of care, needless to say, is often inhabited more thoroughly by women, people of lower class and caste status, working people,

¹⁵ J. Tronto, *Care as the Work of Citizens*, in M. Friedman (ed.), *Women and Citizenship*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 130.

and other disregarded ethnic, religious, linguistic groups. They are the people most often excluded by politics.¹⁶

So care is a democratic subversion of intellectual and ethical hierarchies. The perspective of care then leads us to explore the ways in which we – in practice *and* in theory – treat the demarcation between the spheres of personal relations (familial relations, but also love, friendship) and the so-called impersonal spheres of public relations, with a hierarchy involved.

The traditional association of caring with women rested on a social order that excluded women from many parts of the public sphere. Women (and slaves, servants, and often working-class people) as well as care activities were relegated outside of public life.¹⁷

Dominant liberal ethics is, in its political articulation, the product and expression of a social practice that devalorizes both the attitude and work of care. The heterodox ethics of care gives ordinary questions—*who is taking care of whom, and how?* – the force and relevance necessary for critically examining our political and moral judgments, understand the narrowness of a vision of justice defined by rights.

The critical import of such questions makes care an issue of citizenship and democracy.

Care is a fundamental aspect of human life. In its broadest meanings, care is complex and multidimensional: it refers both to the dispositional qualities we need to care for ourselves and others, such as being attentive to human needs and *taking responsibility* to meet such needs, as well as to the concrete work of caring.¹⁸

Care is «a perspective from which to think about human life»; Tronto reminds us. It is also a political guideline. Not only, as Tronto as shown in *Moral Boundaries*, to set a new agenda for public policies and moral priorities. But also, now, to define the priority of the local, as a new definition of citizenship and humanity.

Despite the burgeoning literature on care, and especially on its usefulness as a framework to guide moral, political, and policy decisions, though, critics of the care perspective persist in insisting that there are some questions that require a

¹⁶ Ibidem.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem.

more universal perspective from which to think about broader political and moral questions.¹⁹

For Tronto, we should think of care as a ground for conferring citizenship: this is what she means by «care is the work of citizens». In a world in which we took the centrality of care more seriously, we would define citizens as people engaged in relationships of care with one another. If we adopt such a seemingly modest definition of citizenship, it would require a radical rethinking of political values. The issue of care today is made more urgent with both the crisis of care, and the situation of deep vulnerability of populations «cumulating» as it were various risks (social, environmental, geographical) and proportionally neglected, as in catastrophe situations. Both facts are connected to the radical injustice of global poverty: by focusing on and valuing care in the North, we insulate people in the North from the harm that their actions inflict upon others. Ordinary citizens in the Anglo-American world, says Tronto, lack determinate knowledge about their complicity in global poverty. «They do not see global poverty and inequality as morally important issues for us».

So there is a connection between care and global justice, a connection that seems to empty the classical care/justice debate, for only the care perspective enables us to really take care of the problem of global injustice. The main inequalities, today, are in the area of care. By articulating Care, Coexistence, Citizenship, we see that what is at issue is not the warranting of universal human rights, or (in the capabilities approach) the possibility to live a full life, or at least to lead a safe human life. What is at issue is political citizenship in a world where it is denied to a majority of humans. Citizenship signifies political coexistence. But today citizenship becomes an exclusionary practice even and utmost, in democracies.

Citizenship is determined by the people who live in a nation state who set the rules for membership. Like a private club that understands the value of its exclusionary rules for inclusion, citizenship can function as a kind of barrier that reflects and protects the political power of those who are already insiders.²⁰

Questions about citizenship are close to care issues because they are local questions. They concern the decisions about membership that are made by the closed circle of those who are already members. «Discussions about citizenship must always then be local and political, and cannot only be made in universal and moral terms».

¹⁹ Ibidem.

²⁰ Ibidem.

4. CONNECTIONS

As Amartya Sen says in defense of his capabilities approach for thinking Human Security:

We are asking the world community to look particularly at the *interconnections* that have to be taken into account in developing a fuller and more integrated approach to the insecurities that plague the lives of so much of humanity. We believe that the effectiveness of our battle against human insecurity requires collaboration at different levels. First of all, focusing on the concern with vulnerability and insecurity can itself be valuable in bringing an important perspective to the *attention* of the world.²¹

The point of the ethics of care as a theory of responsibility is to define citizenship by vulnerability, by needs instead of contribution, by coexistence in a vulnerable world.

The Human Security approach can contribute to the heterodox view of ethics we are calling for, by appealing to the bottom-up approach, which emphasizes the role of social and individual grounds rather than the outlining of institutions; and by appealing to the bottom-up perspective to the dimension of human needs, vulnerabilities, necessities, etc. The concept of human security is essential to a development of bottom-up normative perspectives, bottom being human vulnerability and the need for others, not autonomy.

Adopting a bottom-up model based on vulnerability can shed light on the importance of political relations and living together that are not perceivable within a top-down approach, or with classical and conformist bottom-top approaches of liberal democracies. Political relations must be left open to the questioning of a wide range of human relations, such as: care, trust, familiarity, responsiveness and community that are generated in globalized societies, where people that are and remain strangers are living together, and where one can encounter people in further circles, larger connections. These relations of trust and reliance among strangers – low or weak connections – are vital to the creation of a texture of security, through relational responsibility. The point of the ethics of care as a theory of responsibility is to define citizenship by vulnerability, by needs instead of contribution. We need therefore to *attend and tend* to those horizontal networks of relations and communities that, while not being strictly speaking political in the classical sense, have an expressive political relevance through the acknowledgement of vulnerability or

²¹ A. Sen, *Human Security Now*, in http://www.un.org/humansecurity/sites/www.un.org.humansecurity/files/chs_final_report_-_english.pdf (accessed 7-22-2016).

precariousness of life and the acknowledgement of the weak links that constitute the texture of ordinary life.

The notion of vulnerability indicates today not (in a quite hollow sense) a common feature to all humans, but contexts of ordinary and extraordinary life, in which human beings find their needs, interests, and fragilities, totally exposed. Global change aggravates the exposition of the human populations to situations of disaster in industrial societies in a context of vulnerability to various and cumulated risks. The question of human security and responsibility is enhanced by the addition of vulnerabilities created by the cumulative carelessness toward some «invisible» (to us) humans. Here again, the ethics of care, conceived (cosmo)politically, can lead towards a renewed attention to the precariousness of human situations and to our connections to our fellow inhabitants of the world.

Again, the center of gravity of ethics is shifted from the «just» to the «important,» and again by destroying what seemed to be important. It could help us to go beyond the purely affective or medical notion of care and, in the line of thought represented by Das, but also Diamond, Nussbaum, and Sen, to engage in reconceiving ethics, not on the basis of grand principles, but rather on the basis of the fundamental needs of humans and women. The stakes of an ethics of care ends up epistemological by becoming political: ethics of care seek to highlight the connection between our lack of attention to neglected realities and the lack of theorization of these social realities rendered «invisible,» and in this way to understand why ethical, and often philosophical and political, thought is blind to certain ordinary realities, those connected with the domain of the private, the domestic, and the female.

Thus, we find the continuation of the project of OLP, and the definition of the ordinary, supplied by Wittgenstein: «What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings [...] observations which no one has doubted, but which have escaped remark only because they are always before our eyes.»²²

Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems to destroy everything interesting, all that is great and important? What we are destroying is nothing but houses of cards [*Luftgebäude*].²³

The ethics of care does not aim at installing compassion, solicitude and benevolence as subsidiary values that would lessen the hardness of an impartial conception of justice based on the primacy of rights attributed to

²² L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1958², § 415.

²³ *Ibidem*, § 118.

autonomous, isolated, rational individuals. The ethics of care makes it obvious that we depend on others in a world that values autonomy highly, in theory and practice. It even demonstrates that the most autonomous people are actually the most dependent (by all the help and support they get). It does not aim at enlisting feelings. The notion of care does not refer only to a type of attention to others and a set of practical activities; it also implies a sense of one's dependence and responsibility. The ethics of care does not aim at enlisting compassion and solicitude in the category of subaltern virtues dedicated to soothing an unsympathetic conception of social relations. The ethics of care aims at the acknowledgment of a whole portion of common life systematically ignored in political discourse.

Ethics, then, is not about how to live better or more virtuous or rational lives, but how, simply, for anyone to live an ordinary life in the world where he lives with others, human and non-human.

The world is our home. Human life, we must assume in the first place, is somewhat more important than anything else in human life, except, possibly, what happens to it. It deserves attention, and a seriousness of attention, commensurate with its importance. And since every possibility human life holds, or may be deprived of, of value, of wholeness, of richness, of joy, of dignity, depends all but entirely upon circumstances, the circumstances are proportionately worthy of the serious attention of anyone who dares to think of himself as a civilized human being. A civilization which for any reason puts a human life at a disadvantage; or a civilization which can exist only by putting human life at a disadvantage; is worthy neither of the name nor of continuance. And a human being whose life is nurtured in an advantage which has accrued from the disadvantage of other human beings, and who prefers that this should remain as it is, is a human being by definition only, having much more in common with the bedbug, the tapeworm, the cancer, and the scavengers of the deep sea.²⁴

When Cora Diamond affirms, in her introduction to *The Realistic Spirit*²⁵, that moral philosophy has largely become «stupid and insensitive,» she means insensitive to these simple facts, the very humanity of moral questioning, this ordinary moral life bound up with vulnerable others.

²⁴ J. Agee, Cotton Tenants. *Three Families*, New York, Melville House Publishing, 2013, p. 34.

²⁵ C. Diamond, *Introduction II. Wittgenstein and Metaphysics*, in Ead., *The Realistic Spirit*, pp. 23-24.