

**María Puig de la Bellacasa. 2017.
*Matters of Care: Speculative
 Ethics in More Than Human
 Worlds*. Minneapolis: University
 of Minnesota Press. 280 p.**

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The book *Matters of Care* has as its central premise an “ecological shift” in the embodied phenomenon of care, by conceptualizing it as a product of a profound engagement with all things and beings, described by Puig de la Bellacasa as “more than human worlds” in line with her posthumanist perspective. The book contributes to the feminist tradition of critical thinking on care¹ by following Joan Tronto’s *Moral Boundaries* (1993) and debates about ecological practices and more than human ethics.

Based on her scholarship in philosophy, transdisciplinary studies, STS (Science and Technology Studies), and Feminist Theory,² Puig de la Bellacasa contributes to the terrain of feminist epistemological enquiries. She follows the contribution of Donna Haraway’s *Situated Knowledges* (1988) by considering positionality as embodied quality of objectivity, beyond the male/female binary, in which feminist subjectivity is about limited location and contextually and historically grounded knowledges.³ Therefore, in the discussion of care ethics, the



author avoids the “god trick” perspective (Haraway 1988) of a generic ethical orientation, and focuses on embodied practices that are constituted by three dimensions: affect/affection, labour/work, and ethics/politics, and on the tensions and distribution of these dimensions within different contexts.

In the first part of the book, Puig de la Bellacasa elaborates on Bruno Latour’s notion of “matters of fact as matters of concern” (Latour 2004), and rephrases it into “matters of care.”

Next, she refers to Donna Haraway’s idea of “thinking with” (Haraway 2016) to consider how care is necessary within the relational process of thinking and knowing. Finally, she reflects further about the reciprocity of thinking and knowing with care, and considers touch as a quality of reversibility: “being touched by what we touch”. In the second part of the book, the discussion of care is taken into knowledge practices within natureculture, by drawing on the author’s experiential research in the ecological movement of permaculture,⁴ and on a literature review of knowledge production about soils. This latter part discusses the temporal dissonance between caring for the soil as a living world and the soil as resource, made for technoscientific intervention of the productionist mode of anthropocentric futurity.

With her book, Puig de la Bellacasa brings ethics of care into a multispecies feminist theory, without disregarding the particular human characteristics, or falling into anthropomorphizing nonhuman beings and things. The central question, within the current geological epoch, the Anthropocene, is the pressing need to critically conceptualize and study empirically the logic of capitalism and its impacts on nonhuman and human ecologies (Latour et al. 2018). In

that sense, Puig de la Bellacasa addresses the need of reconfiguring ethics to account for other beings beyond the human, by overcoming the generalized and anthropocentric ethical model, and laying incentives towards the speculation of new ethical frameworks. Her book offers, to all academic disciplines, including anthropology and gender studies, a starting point for acknowledging how nonhuman animals shape us, and how humans' practices of care can constitute new possibilities for more than human ethics.

Notes

- ¹ Carol Gilligan's book *In a Different Voice* (1982) critiqued Kohlberg and Piaget presumed gender neutral theories, and considered women had different voices from men, not by gender but by theme, and named that moral sensitivity as "care ethics." Joan Tronto, in the book *Moral Boundaries* (1993), points out that Carol Gilligan's work falls into the trap of essentialism and binary thought, and stresses the importance of considering care ethics within a broader political and moral theory and the multiplicity of voices/subjectivities.
- ² María Puig de la Bellacasa's academic work follows the Feminist New Materialist school of thought in crossing the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Environmental Humanities. She holds a MSc in Transdisciplinary Studies, a MA in Philosophy, and a PhD in Philosophy from the Université Libre de Bruxelles. Her dissertation, *Politiques féministes et construction des savoirs: "Penser nous devons!"* (2004) was supervised by Isabelle Stengers and focused on the work of Sandra Harding and Donna Haraway.
- ³ In the late 1970s and early 1980s several feminist scholars considered the epistemological value of the perspective of subordinated social groups, and their advantage in contesting topics related to their subordination. The notion of the Feminist Standpoint Theory was first mentioned in Sandra Harding's book *The Science Question in Feminism* (1986) in which she analysed a diversity of theoretical work that engaged in a critical account of knowledge and the position of women in science (as knowledge producers and as subjects of knowledge). Donna Haraway (1988) responded to this book in her article *Situated Knowledges* (Bracke and Puig de la Bellacasa 2004).
- ⁴ Permaculture can be understood as practical, and alternative, ecological sciences and technologies that are used in a political commitment to the care for, and with, earth and the natural mechanisms (Puig de la Bellacasa 2015).

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