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Post-Pandemic Frontiers of Global Justice. A Preliminary Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The socio-political effects of the current pandemic crisis tend to reproduce and reinforce inequalities within societies and at the global level. Moreover, the ongoing situation has provided the occasion for increasing awareness on the risks associated with the current ecological crisis. This article presents and discusses the challenges that the pandemic crisis poses to theories of global justice, relying on Martha Nussbaum's work on the frontiers of justice and expanding its scope to include a fourth frontier. Within the context of growing inequalities in the individuals' endowment of resources and opportunities and of stricter restrictions on freedoms, a liberal conception of global justice should focus on conceptualizing rights and duties of justice from a multidimensional perspective. The increase in inequalities in a global scenario characterised by vulnerability and interdependence requires comprehensive solutions, both redistributive (towards people and peoples) and regenerative (towards the ecosystem).

Keywords: global justice, inequality, Nussbaum, covid19, environmental justice

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1. Did the Virus Make us More Equal?

In the first weeks when Covid-19 hit the scene, an idea went the rounds that the virus was a democratic leveller – it could strike whomever it liked, when it liked.[1] Many hoped the calamity would breed inclusive, transformative reactions/relations of solidarity. But all too soon, in fact, social isolation and pressure on health services showed the virus-leveller image to be an illusion: under the health emergency, inequalities persisted or increased among individuals both across different societies and within one and the same. The pandemic revealed that, in terms of age, gender, profession, prior state of health and place of residence, certain categories of people were more prone than others to catching the virus and having serious or potentially lethal complications. Especially in the first weeks after the start of the pandemic emergency, some scholars advanced the idea that the perception of a common unprecedented risk making us vulnerable in our own bodies could generate a new sense of shared responsibility and care, stimulating institutions to search policies based on egalitarian principles (Loretoni 2020) or appealing to citizens' capacity to adapt their understanding of liberty and autonomy upholding solidaristic practices towards vulnerable people (Henry 2020).

However, when whole nations were forced into restrictions like social/physical distancing and confinement, differences of income, living or working conditions and access to primary care[2] came starkly to the fore and affected people's quality of life, aggravating the inequalities caused by the

[1] This idea is in line with that of certain historians who see traumas striking society as a whole – wars, revolutions, state failure and epidemics – as inequality-reducing 'forces' (Scheidel 2017). Recently, slightly more nuanced interpretations have been proposed, looking at the unequal impacts produced by these phenomena on different groups (Breccia and Frediani 2020). Phillips (2020) has published a comparative study producing evidence that, over the last two centuries, different pandemics have produced different impacts on societies.

[2] To survive the pandemic at all well one needs to be able to work, study and socialize from home: hence to have a good Internet connection. During the emergency the debate over the human right to an Internet connection has returned to the fore. One supporter of that right is the former European Parliament President David Sassoli: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/newsroom/sassoli-access-to-the-internet-must-be-recognised-as-a-new-human-right

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natural and social lottery, i.e., the contingency of being born in a certain place and social context rather than another and with a certain endowment (or absence) of talents and abilities.

In recent years, there has been much talk of worldwide mounting socioeconomic inequalities. Influential economists have revealed a trend over the decades towards greater inequality within nations and across the globe (Piketty 2013, 2020; Milanovic 2018; Stiglitz 2016; Atkinson 2015); it has recently been debated whether the economic crisis that set in with 2008 may have reduced the gap worldwide (Milanovic 2020). But even if were such an inversion of trend is to be confirmed by further studies, it would only amount to a minimal reduction in world inequalities. According to data from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in 2020 the percentage of income going to the poorest 20% of the population had remained less than 2%, while the quota enjoyed by the richest 1% (the threshold for membership of which is around 32,000 dollars) had risen from 18% (1990) to 22% (2016). In a recent analysis, Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz looks at the mid-term trend of the phenomenon, offering a cross-country comparative reading of the widening gap between the well-off and the worst-off in developed countries: "In the past twenty-five to thirty years the Gini index—the widely used measure of income inequality—has increased by roughly 29 per cent in the United States, 17 per cent in Germany, 9 per cent in Canada, 14 per cent in UK, 12 per cent in Italy and 11 per cent in Japan" (Stiglitz 2016, 137). In his analysis, Stiglitz agrees with Piketty and other economists in rejecting solutions based on so-called "trickle down" economic models: during the last four decades, contrary to the expectations of the supporters of trickle-down models, the income and wealth achieved by the best-off did not reverberate on the worst-off but turned into increased land rents, intellectual property rents and monopoly power (*Ibidem*, 143).

Of late the issue of global inequality has been aptly summarized by UN Secretary General, António Guterres, during a lecture that he delivered for the 2020 Nelson Mandela International Day:

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> Even before COVID-19, people everywhere were raising their voices against inequality. Between 1980 and 2016, the world's richest 1 per cent captured 27 per cent of the total cumulative growth in income. But income is not the only measure of inequality. People's chances in life depend on their gender, family and ethnic background, race, whether or not they have a disability, and other factors. Multiple inequalities intersect and reinforce each other across the generations, defining the lives and expectations of millions of people before they are even born.[3]

According to Guterres, to improve on the current situation we need to draw up a *new social contract* and a *new global compact*: the former should aim at fair income and property taxation as well as social protection policies to safeguard the weakest categories; the latter at fair globalization, human rights and dignity for all, living in harmony with nature, respecting the rights of future generations and success measured in human rather than economic terms.

In early October 2020 the President of the World Bank, David Malpass, listed the measures urgently needed to emerge from the pandemic-related crisis: redouble the international community's efforts to alleviate poverty and inequality; set mechanisms in action to prevent loss of human capital due to the pandemic; bring concrete aid to the poorest countries to render their public debt more transparent and curb it permanently with a view to attracting investments; lastly, promote the changes needed to achieve an inclusive, resilient rebound.[4]

[3] The video and transcription of the lecture delivered online on 18 July 2020 are available at: https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/tackling-inequality-new-social-contract-new-era
[4] This was a speech delivered to the Frankfurt School of Finance and Management on 5 October 2020, a transcription of which may be found online: https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2020/10/05/reversing-the-inequality-pandemic-speech-by-world-bank-group-president-david-malpass.

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In their speeches both Guterres and Malpass talked of global justice, although none of them did mention the concept explicitly; they both claim that, wherever people live, they must share the same rights and opportunities for leading a dignified life and they affirmed that it is unjust where this is not the case.[5] Besides mentioning the main issues of inequality and poverty, they put forward proposals for making the international system fairer. Moreover, especially in Guterres' speech, there is explicit reference to contractarian(ish) solutions to tackle persistent inequalities at both the domestic and global level. Maybe unwittingly, both Guterres and Malpass injected the public transnational debate with ideas aligned with the main positions on global justice, namely cosmopolitanism (Caney 2005; Brock 2009) and liberal internationalism (Rawls 1999; Blake 2013).[6]

Although a thorough reconstruction of the characteristics of these two opposing (yet intertwined) fields of the contemporary normative reflection about global politics is beyond the scope of this article, it might be helpful to briefly clarify what I mean with the term global justice here. Following Thomas Nagel's example, I am using the concept broadly to refer to socioeconomic and political justice, focusing "on the application to the world as a whole of two central issues of traditional political theory: the relation between justice and sovereignty, and the scope and limits of equality as a demand of justice" (Nagel 2005). To simplify a very long and complex debate for the sake of brevity, as far as those two fundamental questions are concerned, both cosmopolitan and liberal internationalist accounts of global justice share the assumption that human beings are fundamental and primary subjects for moral concern and respect and have equal moral worth, but they

[5] Guterres explicitly connected inequalities to the asymmetric enjoyment of human rights, and he addressed the intersectional nature of inequalities: "Discrimination, abuse and lack of access to justice define inequality for many, particularly indigenous people, migrants, refugees and minorities of all kinds. Such inequalities are a direct assault on human rights. Addressing inequality has therefore been a driving force throughout history for social justice, labour rights and gender equality".

[6] By liberal internationalism I mean *in primis* John Rawls's attempt to extend the scope of his theory of justice beyond State boundaries and other theoretical accounts of that ilk, claiming that states have different obligations of justice towards citizens and strangers.

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locate the main institutions and the scope of (redistributive) justice differently.[7] While cosmopolitan thinkers envisage global schemes of redistribution, liberal internationalists think that justice applies primarily to state institutions (it has a domestic scope) and they see only a limited yet stringent duty of assistance towards disadvantaged peoples; at the same time, they think that it is normatively desirable to foster interstate cooperation to regulate and reduce the use of war and to avoid the occurrence of the "great evils of human history" (Rawls 1999, 6-10).[8] To say it with other words, cosmopolitanism aims to realise global redistributive justice, whereas liberal internationalism focuses on global political justice (Macdonald and Ronzoni 2012).

2. Pandemic Times and the Frontiers of Global Justice

The subject of global inequality is closely bound up with some of the most urgent problems of international governance as analysed from a global justice angle. These include reducing extreme poverty, planning and conducting effective policies of development cooperation, managing international migration, achieving worldwide health justice and substantial gender parity, as well as equal sharing of the adverse consequences of climate change and the ecological crisis (Armstrong 2019). In her critique of Rawlsian contractarianism, Martha Nussbaum (2006) identified three "frontiers", i.e., problems unsolved by Rawls's seminal reflection on justice as fairness, which she deemed too abstract and unable to deal with the complexity of contemporary societies. Her critique pointed in particular to three frontiers – disability, nationality and species belonging – which highlighted critical

[7] Here my distinction differs from Nancy Fraser's three-way depiction of the debate over the "who" of justice, because I use the term "global justice" in a broader sense and I do not equate global justice with global egalitarian redistribution (Fraser 2009, 33-37).
[8] With the expression "great evils" Rawls referred to "unjust war and oppression, religious persecution and the denial of liberty of conscience, starvation and poverty, not to mention genocide and mass murder" and he argued that all these phenomena "follow from political injustice".

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issues making any liberal institution or policy aiming at substantive empowerment or self-realization infeasible if based on a (difference-blind) conception of justice as fairness. Even if Rawls himself summarized the existence of at least four questions "to be asked later" with respect to the depiction of a political theory of justice – he enlisted the possible extensions of the theory to address intergenerational relationships, the law of peoples, temporal and permanent disabilities and "what is owed to animals and the rest of nature" –, he doubted that justice could answer all of them (1993, 20-22).

The "omissions" in liberal contractarianist accounts are especially worrisome because they entail the exclusion of those "agents whose contribution to overall social well-being is likely to be dramatically lower than that of others" (*Ibidem*, 20): since the contract logic presupposes that the parties expect a mutual advantage, those who are considered unable to take part in the exchange are excluded by default from the choice of the principles of justice. The most problematic aspect of this exclusion is that the supposed inability to positively contribute to the scheme of social cooperation is, in the majority of those cases, the product of a long history of oppression, exclusion and marginalization. Hence, according to Nussbaum (2020, 13-39), unlike Grotian-inspired accounts of justice based on natural law, contract-based accounts of liberalism tend to reproduce long sedimented injustices. Contract-based liberal accounts of justice for the domestic and global contexts, then, expel from the political and moral realm the plurality of subjects who live in our societies, entrusting the choice of the principles of justice – as well as their implementation – to fictional human characters devoid of concrete interests, needs, desires and feelings (Young 1990, 96-121).

From a pandemic angle, I here see these frontiers persisting despite closer attention being accorded to non-ideal aspects of justice by liberal political theorists and a stronger commitment than in the past being held on the part of liberal politicians and organisations that support states in international governance to pursue coordinated policies and actions aimed at improving

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living conditions globally.[9] In protracting the emergency situation, the pandemic has worsened living conditions for billions of people and heightened awareness of the persisting frontiers of justice, though not to an equal degree for everybody (Nussbaum 2011). To say it in other terms, the ongoing pandemic is negatively affecting the functionings (individuals' ways of being and acting) and capabilities of people. Nussbaum has proposed a list of ten fundamental or central capabilities – life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; control over one's environment – which constitute the "social minimum" that individuals need in order to lead a minimally decent life in their societies.[10] Combining the risk of death and the limitations to mobility and social interactions, the pandemic has negatively impacted on the capabilities of the majority of people living on the planet, although in very unequal ways.

Here I will briefly analyse how the three frontiers of *disability*, *nationality* and *species belonging* identified by Nussbaum appear in the light of the current (protracted) pandemic situation, in order to shed light on the main criticalities that reveal the persistence and escalation of injustices within the context of a global health emergency. In line with Nussbaum's original

[9] I especially mean here attempts to create and maintain a shared global framework to solve critical problems and manage vexed issues of interdependency in a fair and coordinated way. This entails not just one single scheme, but a series of sectorial or issue-specific schemes run by a range of actors – notably the United Nations and regional organizations, sometimes States or groups of States – working together to implement and foster a notion of international governance tied to liberal principles. Examples of such schemes are: campaigns to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs), high-level conferences on climate change (COPs), and promotion of multilateral agreements and coordination mechanisms designed to manage transnational phenomena (e.g., global or regional compacts on migration, illicit trafficking, etc.).

[10] Nussbaum's list is not identical, but similar to the list of "basic human rights" that decent social institutions ought to guarantee to their citizens in liberal internationalist accounts of global justice. Decent institutions are not just according to the liberal standards, but they deserve the international recognition of legitimacy insofar as they are peaceful and respect the basic human rights of their citizens. Aiming at developing a political conception of human rights, Rawls (1999, 65; 78 ff.) included in his list the right to life (that he understands as a right to individual subsistence and security), the right to freedom of conscience, to freedom from slavery, serfdom and forced labour, as well as the rights to private property and formal equality..

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intentions, I resort to the frontiers of justice in order to illustrate some pitfalls of theoretical accounts of global justice, examining them under the light of the pandemic situation. With respect to Nussbaum's account, I propose two innovations which I think might be helpful to adapt the analysis to the current context. Firstly, I think that the third frontier's scope should be enlarged – therefore, I label it *species belonging and ecological equilibria* – to look at the effects that injustices have not only on living beings, but also on the complex relation between humans and their ecosystems. Secondly, I would add a frontier to the traditional list, namely the frontier of *gender*, since the last months have shown that women are among the groups that have suffered more during the pandemics, revealing the gendered and intersectional implications of the persisting inequalities characterizing our societies. The current pandemic state of affairs constitutes an exceptional condition but its protracted character risks to undermine our ideas about social life in general; it is a natural *experimentum tremendum* which might offer insights to develop more realistic thought experiments and multidimensional philosophical reflections to articulate new conceptions of global justice or to revise the existing ones.[11]

2.1 Disability

Isolation and distancing have hugely complicated the lives of people with physical and mental disability or chronic pathology, often markedly cramping their ability to work, study or train on any regular basis, or to cultivate social relations outside the family circle. Moreover, people with disabilities have a higher risk of death from COVID-19 than people without disabilities and the difficulty of getting the vaccines in many parts of the world has prolonged the risk for months. The necessary reclusiveness and the emergency protocols have made it especially difficult for disabled people to get access to health services with the needed tempestivity and continuity and this has worsened

[11] Here I follow Adam Swift's suggestion that the pandemic provides political philosophy with valuable evidence to question the supposedly just character of democratic social arrangements, i.e., policies and institutions (Swift 2021).

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the experience of illness and disability. Also, being recluse and hardly visible to the rest of their societies for most of the time, disabled people living at home or in care institutions have been more exposed to violence and abuse during lockdown periods, with very few occasions of communicating their suffering and to be heard.

The lives of those involved in helping temporary and permanently disabled people – caregivers, family members or workers providing assistance in the home – have been thrown out by limitations to mobility and the difficulty of getting their assisted people access to primary health care; professional and family care workers' physical and mental stress has been amplified because of the increased workload in conditions of uncertainty. Another widespread problem for those looking after persons with a disability or chronic illness has been an increased difficulty in tapping social security resources. During the lockdown periods, many professional caregivers have lost their jobs because of the restrictions to mobility and of the reduced income of the households of people with disability caused by the economic consequences of the pandemics – this problem has disproportionally affected immigrant female caregivers within developed societies, many of which had been working without legal contracts and were at risk of being expelled from their host countries.

Such examples reveal the intersectional impact of pandemic inequalities and highlight the need to take into account the intersections between the different frontiers of justice. The inequality of starting conditions has been drastically exacerbated by the emergency situation. Although reliable and comparable data are lacking at the moment, if one looks at the condition of the disabled from a global standpoint, one fact becomes crystal clear: if the disabled in liberal societies have seen their quality of life drastically curtailed, their peers in developing countries have seen their very survival in jeopardy.[12]

[12] For instance, see the research and analysis report *The lived experience of disabled people during the COVID-19 pandemic* issued by the Disability Unit of the UK Cabinet Office with data collected from June to September 2020: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-lived-experience-of-disabled-people-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/the-lived-experience-of-disabled-people-during-the-covid-19-pandemic. For a journalistic account, see the dossier coordinated by Ruth Clegg for

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The uncertainty over the timeline of the global health emergency management and the difficult eradication of the Covid-19 virus makes disabled people ever-more worried about their ability to hold out in the future. As effectively summarized in a recent article published on *The Lancet*:

> People with disabilities do not want a return to the pre-pandemic status quo, which was a world filled with complex barriers to inclusion, especially in low-income and middle-income countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased risks, compounded unmet health needs, and disproportionately affected the socioeconomic lives of people with disabilities around the world. As evidence evolves, strategic thinking is needed about how society, social inclusion, and public health can better reach the 15% of the global population who are disabled (Shakespeare, Ndagire and Q.E. Seketi 2021, 1332).

2.2 Nationality

The worsening health situation and the adoption of emergency measures to contain the spreading contagion have blighted the lot of peoples in developing countries and especially emerging countries[13] in terms of respect and protection of basic human rights and/or development of capabilities. Over and above the chronic shortcomings of welfare and crucial sectors of public services like education, transport, social security and communications, another problem has set in. In many countries, the availability of reliable, systematic and regularly updated data on the health situation is reduced; this limits the possibilities to effectively contrast the spread of the contagion, to reduce the number of deaths and to increase the number of vaccinated people, with negative effects for virtually all countries. The problem of the

BBC News published on 30 June 2021 on the impact of the pandemic for the lives of disabled people in the UK: https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-57652173

[13] By 'emerging countries' one means those whose economies have recently achieved growth rates close to those of more industrialized countries. They are often referred to under acronyms like BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and MINT (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey).

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international production and distribution of vaccines notably poses serious questions in terms of global justice, urging to publicly scrutinize policies based on "vaccine nationalism" (Saksena 2021; Herlitz et al. 2021).

People living in countries experiencing protracted conflicts (e.g., Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Libya, Pakistan) have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, because of the weak state institutions' inability to inform and assist their populations to reduce the spread of the disease (Polo 2020). Throughout the emergency, many external aid and development cooperation funds and programmes have been downsized and temporarily halted because of the need for donors and NGOs to reduce the risks and protect the health of (Western) aid workers, sometimes worsening the living conditions of local aid workers who lost their income. Although there is some evidence that public support for development cooperation has not been substantially reduced (Schneider et al. 2021), the protracted stop or the downsizing of projects on the field risk to reduce the access to fundamental good and services of local populations. Moreover, as the tremendous earthquake which struck Haiti on August 2021 showed, people who live in natural disasters' affected areas suffer more because of the pandemic because of the inagibility of houses and health infrastructures, post-disaster precarious hygiene conditions and slow international humanitarian response to the disaster. Finally, internally displaced people and migrants *en route*, as well as *sans papiers* migrants in host countries, face disproportionally high risks of contracting the virus and of not receiving adequate health services.

In some countries throughout the world, we are witnessing an authoritarian turn, an indefinite protraction of the state of emergency and an expansion of governments' emergency powers. Although derogations to human rights due to the need of containing the Covid-19 virus' spread have been common in democratic countries, they have rasied justified concerns about the problematic effects that emergency measures could have with respect to the erosion of democratic liberties (Thomson and Ip 2020) as well as inappropriate attacks based on unfounded and misleading analogies and

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parallels between present measures to limit the spread of the disease and fascist and Nazi policies of discrimination, deportation and extermination or South African racial segregation (Levine 2020). In this present phase, some authoritarian governments – e.g., Belarus, China, Egypt, Iran, Russia, Turkey – have adopted measures curtailing civil and political freedom, sometimes using the need to contain the virus as a justification for stepping up control over individuals and groups suspected of working in opposition to the government in office. Those in opposition are charged with subversive and potentially destabilizing activity; the emergency backdrop is being used to free the government from its obligation for transparency, accountability and justification. In several cases the press and organisms monitoring the protection of human rights have been subjected to gross limitations in the name of anti-Covid policy. What is more, many governments of emerging/developing countries are tending not to give the World Health Organization any precise data on the course of the pandemic, sometimes because of objective problems in establishing them, but sometimes as a deliberate political decision for avoiding possible losses of consensus or blame from the international community. This further cramps the citizens' quality of life: the populations are unable to express dissent from their own government and find it especially difficult to migrate under emergency circumstances – the tightening and militarizing of control rules out any 'voice' or 'exit' options -, while certain individuals, those politically marginalised and socially and economically disadvantaged (children, women, minorities) are especially hard hit.

2.3 Species Belonging and Ecological Equilibria

SARS-CoV-2 has been called a virus produced by and symbolizing globalization. At present its geographical origin has been traced to Wuhan, in China. Since the beginning of 2020 the virus has spread to nearly all countries: the very few governments that report no cases of contagion in their territory include North Korea and Turkmenistan, but because of the extreme

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isolation of these countries, these data are impossible to verify.[14] According to a recent study (conducted by Hongru Wang, Lenore Pipes and Rasmus Nielsen) whose main results have been published in *Nature*, the biological origin of the virus stems from a recent mutation of a long-existent virus: SARS-CoV-2 has 96% of its genetic make-up in common with a virus found in a cave inhabited by bats in the Chinese province of Yunnan – though this virus seems not to have infected humans for over 140 years (Cyranoski 2020). As with other variants belonging to the Coronavirus family, a spillover occurred: a pathogen hopped from one species to another. Man may indeed be a steppingstone to other species.

The incidence of similar disease spillover phenomena has increased in the last fifty years, largely due to the environmental impact of intensive agriculture and stock-raising that lead to deforestation, soil sickness and wild fauna changing habitat, as well as to the stress undergone by animals in stock-breeding lots. The origin and evolution of the pandemic show that the relationship of the human species with other animal species does not reflect any notion of interspecies justice or sensitivity to the need for intergenerational justice preserving biodiversity worldwide; nor does it accord equal respect to all forms of sentient life or recognise non-human animals the right to lead a "decent life" (Zuolo 2018; Singer 1975). As occurs with the problems of pollution and climate change when closely connected to inter-species relations, the people that cause the ecological crisis are not the same people who prove most vulnerable to its adverse effects. This means that, although ecological crises such as those associated with climate change and pollution might have a planetary scope, they do not affect the quality of life of all the people on the planet equally (Nussbaum 2006, 325 ff.).

The current pandemic, especially during its first months, has produced a window of opportunity to raise awareness about issues of interspecies justice, not only with reference of the origin of the lethal disease, but also about the

[14] The data of recorded cases are published daily by the World Health Organization: https://covid19.who.int/.

ISSN 2724-6299 (Online)
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duties of caring and of providing decent living conditions or some well-being standards for domestic pets, breeding animals, work animals and wild animals even in times of health emergency. As a matter of fact, non-human animals' living conditions have been shaken up as a consequence to lockdowns and reduced (human) mobility: some of them have suffered – e.g., domestic pets left alone because of the prolonged illness and hospitalisation of their human companions – while others – e.g., wild animals – have experienced unprecedented opportunities of leaving the spaces where they are normally confined and making forays in (deserted) urban contexts, temporarily blurring the boundaries between the "city" and "nature" (Scott 2020). For the post-pandemic future, the reconfiguration of interspecies relationships needs to be grounded on a thorough study of the information and data regarding the interactions between human and non-human animals that have been collected during the last two years, in order to devise policies of work and mobility more mindful of the effects that human activities might have on other species' prospects of survival.

Recently, some scholars have considered the idea that the health crises such as the current pandemics is an instance of a larger, medium-term process of self-destruction unwittingly undertaken by humanity, which would eventually lead to its mass destruction both as a species and as civilization (Solinas 2020; Hailwood 2015).[15] Such a trend would reflect an attitude which is antithetical to Hans Jonas' *ethics of responsibility*, understood as an imperative to adopt a prudential approach to the use of potentially dangerous technology, in order to guarantee the survival of humanity across generations once the boundary between city and nature has been blurred. This account of ethics is based upon the new categorical imperative that there be a mankind [or humanity] in the future. This kind of responsibility does not apply only

[15] Some authors prefer to speak of *omnicide*, in order to shed light on the present trend of destruction not only from an anthropocentric perspective, but also from a non-antropocentric perspective (Pedersen 2021). Simon Hailwood (2015) elaborated a broader philosophical discussion on the evolving relationship between the human species and nature, presenting and discussing the main positions on this point.

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"to the future human individuals but to the *idea* of Man [human being], which is such that it demands the presence of its embodiment in the world" (Jonas 1984, 43).

Rather than producing the effect of grounding a new ethics of responsibility, the awareness of the ongoing macroscopical ecological crises and the perception of the inability – and perhaps myopic, nihilistic or self-distructive unwillingness – of the current generation to solve or at least to sensibly mitigate them has generated a diffused sense of despair which emerges from the discussion on the rather new concept of "Anthropocene" as the geological epoch during which the Earth's equilibria and structure are modified as a consequence of human activities (Cooke 2016; Raffnsøe 2016). Criticising optimistic conceptions of development which neglect the loss of non-human natural value associated to the dynamism of productive forces, Darrel Moellendorf (2017) stressed the need to take into account the destruction of the ecosystem produced as a collateral effect of human activities in terms of extinction of species, elimination of natural habitats and depletion of natural resources. As a matter of fact, destruction might be a non-anthropocentric interpretative lens to make sense of the Anthropocene, alternative or complementary to the anthropocentric interpretation of an epoch of increasing wealth inequalities and the worsening of living conditions for the global poor, especially for those living in ecologically fragile habitats. Looking for some hope that the Anthropocene's ultimate end is not necessarily the human species' extinction and/or the collapse of planet's natural equilibria, Moellendorf (2020; 2022) considers also the alternative, positive Promethean interpretation, which relies on the possibility that knowledge and technical innovation might serve to put in place effective measures to escape the Anthropocene's nightmares, achieving poverty reduction and creating prosperity for people, providing answers to ecological problems (e.g., climate engineering) and developing international cooperation for realising these goals.

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https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2724-6299/14242

During the pandemics, some attention has been reserved by media, governments and international organizations to the need of escaping the present crisis through a comprehensive rethinking of our societies' models of production and consumption. The European Union – especially through the European Commission – has been especially vocal in stating its commitment to the realization of a climate-neutral Europe and to the funding of sustainable and "green" recovery policies and initiatives (Green and Mauger 2021). In a press conference held on 28 May 2020, the European Commission's Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, while making the case explicitly mentioned the urgency to "green mainstreaming" the investments for the recovery financed under the NextGenerationEU funding programme. This requires not only to support institutions and businesses which engage in green transition, but also to allocate the 25% of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework to climate action and to set the "do no harm" principle as the norm for the interactions between EU citizens and the ecosystem.[16] Although the launch of similar plans of actions (re-)formulated during pandemic times[17] might be evidence of what Moellendorf (2022) calls "mobilizing hope", it is too soon to assess whether such policies will substantively correct or sooth the effects of the disruption of natural equilibria and of oppressive interspecies relations.

[16] During the press conference, Timmermans affirmed: "Protecting and restoring biodiversity and natural ecosystems is also key to our health and well-being. It can help boost our resilience and prevent the emergence and spread of future virus outbreaks". Thus, he recognises that preventing the outburst of future pandemic crises is an urgent priority; however, this is not the only goal of the European Green Deal. He affirms that the EU needs to adopt a broader and future-oriented perspective, aiming at transforming the tenets of member states' systems of production and consumption through a clean energy transition, and making sure that recovery investments are directed towards "renewable energy and storage, clean hydrogen, batteries, carbon capture and storage, and sustainable infrastructure". To read the whole statement, see https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_20_964.

[17] It is worth pointing out that the European Green Deal had been included in the programme of the European Commission led by Ursula von der Leyen which took office in December 2019 since the very start; however, the outburst of the pandemics has offered a boost to its implementation thanks to the resources allocated for the post-pandemic recovery.

ISSN 2724-6299 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2724-6299/14242

2.4 Gender

The marked inequalities associated with the pandemic have brought to light the existence of another frontier of global justice that deserves a mention. This is no novelty: gender inequality is a structural injustice that has hitherto been discussed largely in relation to the notions of justice within state boundaries, but it has been largely neglected in reflections about global justice. It is widely acknowledged that, during the last two years, the persistence and pervasiveness of structural gender-related inequalities have been aggravated by the emergency situation; at the moment, we lack comprehensive data and research to develop an adequate understanding of the magnitude of this phenomenon. In general, female researchers have experienced greater difficulties than male researchers during the pandemics – even here, the phenomenon seems to have an intersectional dimension, with precarious researchers, mothers of school-aged children and women caring for family members carrying a heavier burden; in general, it seems that they could produce less research because of the extreme circumstances created by the pandemic emergency (Buckle 2021). Since the vast majority of researchers who contribute to the study of gender dynamics are women, these inequalities could have not only the negative effects of exposing them to worrying levels of physical and psychological stress and slowing down their career advancement, but they also risk to hamper the possibility that we have of fully appreciating and making sense of the pandemic gender-based inequalities, because the quality of research outputs could be reduced.

Not only researchers, but all female workers have faced difficult work conditions, especially during the lockdowns, but also once they could go back to their workplaces. At home, the difficulties of separating and harmonising work and family/care life increased considerably because of the perceived need to perform many tasks while reassuring family members – especially children – scared by the possibility of the contagion, anxious because of the unprecedented emergency situation and upset because of the forced confinement (Boncori 2020). This impacted negatively not only on time

ISSN 2724-6299 (Online)
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management and work productivity, but also on the mental load and the "cognitive labour" that women have been experiencing during the last months, a dimension which is generally neglected in official reports. Drawing on the definition proposed by Allison Daminger (2019) in a study based on interviews, I use the expression "cognitive labour" to refer to all those cognitive activities that women normally do to anticipate others' – in particular, family members' – needs, searching for solutions, taking decisions and monitoring the effectiveness of the adopted solutions. This kind of labour, which is often invisible, is tiring and stressful, especially when under challenging physical and emotional conditions such as those experienced during the pandemic emergency. Although there is not (yet) a wide body of scholarly research dealing with them, the unequal effects of the pandemics on women have been continuously present in the public debate throughout the past months; data provided by international organisations, governments, civil society actors have been transmitted by media outlets and they have fueled the discussion on the gender-specific difficulties encountered by women during the pandemics. In the implementation of recovery policies undertaken by many governments, however, the specific attention to gender dynamics does not seem to be a top priority.

It is important to notice that the gendered effects of this pandemics are not unprecedented: all kinds of global health emergencies hamper the access to effective health services, especially to those service which have to do with sexual and reproductive health (Wenham et al. 2020; Bristow 2017). Also, the rise of sexual and domestic violence which is associated with emergency situations makes the current phase even more dramatic for women and girls, and inadequate or late health and psychological care services might conduce to the second victimization for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. In conflict and post-conflict situations and more in general in many developing and emerging countries, where the infrastructures and human resources are normally lacking, the difficulties to receive assistance for women can be unsurmountable: this explains why, for instance, in Sierra

ISSN 2724-6299 (Online)
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Leone after the 2014 Ebola emergency teenage pregnancies grew by 23% with respect to the previous year and in the Zika-affected countries of South America in 2016 – Brazil, Colombia and El Salvador, all countries where abortion is illegal – there has been widespread resort to unsafe abortions (Neetu et al. 2020; Wenham et al. 2020, 196).

The negative consequences of the pandemics which are especially affecting women are many and very often some of them are experienced at the same time. Extreme stress borne by caregiving women – be they professionally and economically acknowledged or not as caregivers –, women's increased economic and occupational precariousness, increase in gender and domestic violence especially during lockdowns and, systematic violations of girls' right to education in developing/emerging countries – all these are worrying signs of a worsening trend in the quality of life that women experience in different parts of the world.[18] An aspect that has received remarkable attention by the media as well as by international organisations, governments and civil society organisations is the steep increase in the (reported) cases of domestic violence and, in some countries, of femicides and women's suicides which has occurred after February 2020, while the policies undertaken to contrast gender-based violence have received less attention (Peterman et al. 2020; Standish and Weil 2021; Blofield et al. 2021). This rise of gender-based violence has been denounced since the early weeks of the pandemic by UN Women, which has coined the expression "shadow pandemic" to refer to this phenomenon.[19] To conclude this section on the fourth frontier of global justice that appears especially frightening in the light of the pandemics, it is important to stress that a theoretical account of the

[18] Data on various aspects of increasing gender-related inequality during the pandemic can be found on a dedicated page of the European Institute for Gender Equality website: https://eige.europa.eu/topics/health/covid-19-and-gender-equality.

[19] UN Women has recently published a rapid assessment report, which, although based mainly on "preliminary and anecdotal information" because of the scarcity of systematic and reliable data, gives an idea of the trends of gender-based violence during the pandemic: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/impact-of-covid-19-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-and-service-provision#view

ISSN 2724-6299 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2724-6299/14242

gendered effects produced by the current emergency ought to be framed within the framework of global justice, spurring societies, international organisations and individuals to take concrete actions to enhance the empowerment of girls and women.

3. Redistribution and Regeneration as Solutions to Global Injustices

Hitherto those involved with global justice have tended to favour the quest for solutions along redistribution lines: to reduce inequalities and lighten their impact in such a way as to benefit persons and peoples bearing the brunt. For simplicity's sake one might say that whereas cosmopolitan theory has gone for an egalitarian pattern of redistribution, the various forms of liberal internationalism are proposing a scheme of sufficientarianism. The cosmopolitan approach to global justice aims (at least in the long term) to achieve zero inequality in people's individual or collective access to resources and opportunities. Measures of redistribution to this end include levying a global tax on the consumption or production and sale of unsustainable resources and products – e.g., fossil fuels and plastic – the proceeds being destined to fund development schemes. By contrast, liberal internationalism favours redistribution mainly within the frontiers of the single State, confining the obligations of global justice to ensuring that disadvantaged populations and persons have access to the primary goods needed for subsistence.

The fact remains that, in our present world scenario, quite clearly the economic and social crisis triggered by the pandemic (or heightened by it in societies that had not yet surmounted the phase that began in 2008) will *not* generate a surplus of resources usable for redistribution according to the principles of social justice, whether these be egalitarian or sufficientarian. Thus, any significant reduction of worldwide inequalities achieved by global institutions or governments sharing a sense of global justice would seem a remote, not to say utopian, prospect. At which point one might be tempted to

ISSN 2724-6299 (Online)
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conclude that the issue of redistributive global justice has foundered and might just as well be abandoned. However, during the pandemic certain egalitarian proposals for redistribution measures have received a new lease of life: the social justice debate not only figured in the American presidential campaign, but it has received public impetus in various European countries – Italy, Spain and Germany, amongst others. During 2020 the idea of an unconditional basic income – as theorised nearly thirty years ago by Philippe van Parijs (1991) – returned on the agenda. It was presented as a temporary emergency redistribution measure designed to meet various needs: to mitigate inequalities, provide social protection for the low-income bracket, obviate social discontent and reboot consumption. The basic income idea, envisaged as a national-level project, has also been aired as a transnational measure to be adopted simultaneously by the 27 EU countries.[20] As things stand at present, none of these measures have yet been put into practice, but the emergency situation may spawn experiments that seemed unthinkable in 'normal' times. So, it seems early days to write off the concept of redistributive justice, unlikely though it seems to be achievable on any really broad scale.

The thinking behind this paper on the frontiers of global justice suggests certain tentative conclusions. Our need to prevent the outbreak of viruses like Covid-19 demands that the theory and political agenda of global justice[21] include not just redistribution-based arguments, but greater attention to the inequalities produced by the ecological crisis. The post-pandemic global justice scenario ought to incorporate a regenerative justice dimension designed to restore impaired ecological equilibria or at least offset the adverse

[20] On this see the European Commission press communiqué released on 15 May 2020 concerning the European citizen scheme "Start Unconditional Basic Incomes (UBI) throughout the EU". It may be found online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_840.

[21] As shown at the beginning of the article, global justice does not merely exist in the writings of political philosophers, but is being proposed as a series of adoptable policies advocated by authoritative representatives of institutions (such as the United Nations and World Bank) who are actively involved in world governance.

ISSN 2724-6299 (Online)
https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.2724-6299/14242

effects of human activity on the ecosystem. Such a view of social justice would link the arguments of environmental and climate justice to those of social justice, establishing a binding commitment to justice and identifying mechanisms for political institutions to make good that commitment, as well as an ethical basis underpinning the decisions taken by individuals and communities.

If we survey the current international scene, a number of liberal governments still do not appear ready to take on board any conception of global justice that combines these various dimensions. However, in the last few years we have witnessed the rise of movements forcibly arguing – and coordinating transnationally – the claims of worldwide climate/environment and gender justice. One thinks of the youth protest movement Fridays for Future, or the women all over the world contributing to the #metoo discussion, the issue of female discrimination and sexual violence in the workplace, or again the Black Lives Matter movement which has come to the fore internationally during the pandemic in protest against police brutality and all racial violence against black people. Such progressive movements are the avant-garde of global justice. Joining forces with international organizations (like the United Nations) working towards a new global governance that both reduces inequalities and safeguards the ecosystem, they are also spurring political philosophy to hone the principles and priorities of a global justice system geared to the post-pandemic future.

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