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Solidarity as Acknowledged Dependence

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Article abstract

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Abstract
In the light of a virtue-ethical turn in the ethics of public health, I discuss the call for solidarity in the pandemic. I develop a reading of Alasdair MacIntyre's concept of Acknowledged Dependence to provide a basis for a virtue-ethical account of solidarity. Virtues enable correct responses to characteristic experiences of a human life. Solidarity and compassion correspond to the experience of mutual dependence in a way that is conducive to the common good. Compliance with precautions against the pandemic can be understood as exercises of uncalculating giving in the context of a community in which everyone owes this uncalculating giving to everyone else and, in this sense, acts of solidarity.

Introduction

Recent discussions in public health, social work, and professional care have increasingly directed their attention to virtue ethics and its implications for these fields (Papouli 2018; Fahlquist 2019; Friedrich 2020). The pandemic reinforces this tendency (Bellazi and Boyneburgk 2020; Hughes 2020; del Castillo 2021; Galang et al. 2021). I provide a theoretical basis for the discussion by outlining the metaethics of solidarity. Given a virtue-ethical commitment, solidarity is best understood as acknowledged dependence as discussed in MacIntyre's *Dependent Rational Animals*. I show how the solidarity required in combating the pandemic supports my claim.

I begin with a brief overview on the discussion. My aim is to highlight important aspects and open questions, so that those committed to a virtue-ethical turn can build on my contribution. These open questions, I argue, arise mainly from the disregard for a substantial conception of the good. Virtues are character traits that dispose agents to confront characteristic experiences of a human life in a

way that makes this life good (Nussbaum 1988: 36, 48f). So, we need an account of these experiences and how virtuous reaction to them is conducive to a good life in order to understand how solidarity can be a virtue and which demands it generates.

I draw on MacIntyre's work to show that the experience in question is that of mutual dependence, that the corresponding virtues are solidarity and compassion, and that solidarity is conducive to the common good. This allows to answer two more question the discussion has not addressed adequately: (1) which moral demands exactly arise from the virtues in question, and (2) how virtues can be action-guiding. Virtues are often understood as means between extremes, but I argue that this conceptualization of the demands of virtue in the pandemic is insufficient. I show that the attempt to present the moral demands of virtue in the pandemic as reasons to act introduces considerations that do not fit the virtue-ethical framework.

In the third section I will show that compliance with common measures can express the acknowledgment of mutual dependence. By complying with these measures we give to others what we can because they depend on us. On the other hand, we can expect them to give to us what they can. Therefore, these actions are acts of solidarity that actualize a common good.

Virtues in the Pandemic

Before getting to the heart of the matter, I will give a brief explanation concerning theoretical labels and commitments. Moral philosophy is commonly divided into three major schools of thought: deontological theories, utlitarianism, and virtue ethics.

The relation between these three approaches, as well as the question of exact delineation (or impossibility thereof) is itself subject to an extensive metaethical debate. I cannot address this debate here. However, I think the positions I will draw on are characterized by two important and interrelated assumptions which justify the subsumtion under the label "Virtue Ethics".

Virtue ethics is holistic in two ways: it looks at every aspect of the situation in order to judge what to do, and it places these actions in the context of the entire life of an agent (MacIntyre 1999: 66f; Hughes 2020)[1]. Virtue ethics asks what kind of persons agents should be, so that the right actions directly flow from the dispositions of their character (Fahlquist 2019: 214). The context of an agent's character and conception of the good life makes them intelligible as a person for whom these actions make sense. To be virtuous is to be a person for whom acting right makes sense (Papouli 2018: 9f).

Another point is an intimate relation between morality and human nature. While this relation is spelled out in different ways, the important point is always the idea that moral demands are grounded in human nature, and that acting according to these serves to actualize this human nature. "Simply put: the virtuous person has a grasp of human good, and her virtuous action springs from this grasp" (Lott 2012: 408)[2]. The positions I will discuss commit themselves to these two core tenets of virtue ethics.

In general, the proponents of a virtue-ethical turn develop their arguments in opposition to a utilitarian approach (Hughes 2020; Bellazzi and Boyneburgk 2020: 3, Galang et al. 2021: 1). According to Bellazzi and Boyneburgk (2020), a combination of utilitarianism and a negative concept of liberty is the predominant moral paradigm. On this view, moral demands concern situations that restrict possibilities to maximize pleasure. Therefore, they argue, the population is reluctant to comply with measures and precautions because, through the lens of

this paradigm, "[a]ny form of control or external imposition is regarded as a threat to the possibility of maximizing pleasure, hence as a threat to morality" (3).

In consequence, the restrictions imposed on the free pursuit of pleasure are to be measured against the extent to which Covid19 itself restricts it. Only if the loss of pleasure from the pandemic is larger in amount than from the measures against the pandemic these measures can be morally justified (ibid.: 4).

In contrast to this mostly restrictive view, Bellazzi and Boyneburgk emphasize the inspiring role of morality. They argue that we should adopt and foster primarily the virtues of generosity, prudence, and courage and additionally "patience, perseverance, and obedience to reasonable government action (ibid.: 5)" to see the worth in complying with government measures. Generosity is the virtue of giving up on personal benefit for the sake of others. Prudence enables us to relate our actions to the wider context of the community. And courage means to adopt a right attitude towards things that frighten us, such as the constant danger of infection with a potentially deadly disease (ibid.: 5f).

While they focus on virtues that characterize good citizenship, others apply the critique of utilitarianism to the treatment of those who uphold the public health infrastructure (Galang et al. 2021: 1): hospital workers everywhere are overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of patients as well as the severity of the illness. Their strain is not simply that of being overworked, struggling with insufficient resources, and more. In addition to that, triage and the general need for a just distribution of scarce medical resources force medical workers to constantly act against their own moral convictions (Hughes 2020); they acquire a moral code that is specific for their profession, yet the very conditions that inculcate in them this moral code force them to act against it (Galang et al. 2021: 1).

Utilitarians might concede that this is unfortunate. Still, on their view, these moral injuries are justified as long as the outcome of possible alternatives is worse. The same holds for the grief and loss of those who lost loved ones to Covid19. But such calculations can be unbearable from a first-personal perspective:

> Like grief, experienced today both by medical frontline workers and families of victims, this moral distress can become overpowering on a personal level. There is, therefore, an urgent need to turn away from the consequentialist and deontological ethics and look more into the insights of virtues and virtue ethics (ibid.).

A right attitude towards these overpowering phenomena requires the virtue of compassion (del Castillo 2021: 1). Agents who possess it will still make decisions that might cause others distress. But they will perform these actions in a way that expresses their knowledge of this fact, such as a hospital worker who conveys bad news in a sympathetic way and offers support (Hughes 2020). This is another upshot of the holistic approach of virtue ethics: it bears on all situations and does not only affect what an agent will do but also how they do it (Hursthouse 1999: 38f). "[The virtues] are seen in the small kindnesses extended by a neighbour, as well as in the sharing of research data in an open and transparent way between institutions and nations (Hughes 2020)".

In sum, from a virtue-ethical perspective, living up to the moral demands of the pandemic will not appear as a trade-off between small and large evils, because facing evil is still a good action when it is done virtuously (Bellazzi and Boyneburgk 2020: 8).

Dependence, Solidarity, and the Common Good

On my view, the literature I presented so far leaves open important points, of which two are especially striking. One is the attempt to place the virtue of

compassion between two extremes: del Castillo (2021) argues that compassion in public health is exercised through "[a]ttending to the needs of the people who suffer due to the challenges brought about by the pandemic" (Table 1). He places virtuous compassion between insufficient and excessive exercises. Clearly, "apathy and indifference" are results of lacking in compassion. But it is hard to see how an excess in compassion could result in "cruelty and harshness" (ibid.). If anything, cruelty also stems from a lack in compassion. So, this attempt fails to adequately place the virtue of compassion between two extremes, while others do not even try to describe conditions of success and failure in exercising the respective virtues. Therefore, we need an account of the virtues in question that allows us to determine these conditions.

Another problem is the lack of a substantial concept of the good, most evidently in the case of Bellazzi and Boyneburgk who link their discussion of the virtues to Harry Frankfurt's concept of second-order desires (7). This is a dubious theoretical move given his voluntarist commitment (Frankfurt 1998a: 14, 17). For virtue ethics, there are facts about situations which make actions morally required. The exercise of a virtue is good, and, for the virtuous agent, the apprehension of an action as an actualization of the specific good, which the situation demands, is a reason to act[3]. Because acquiring virtue is learning to love the good (Burnyeat 1980: 75–77), to habitualize virtue means to become capable of seeing those facts and apprehending them as reasons to act. Since the good is by definition the aim of practical reasoning, it is that which rational agents want. While virtue ethics admits the possibility to act against the demands revealed by practical reasoning, this is not understood as a genuine decision between different, yet equivalent courses of action, but rather as the difference between success and failure in exercising this practical reasoning (McDowell 1998: 55f). Virtue ethicists therefore deny that the question "Why should I care that this action is good?" has a meaningful application[4].

For voluntarists, explaining how reasons to act arise from an agent's judgment that an action is morally called for, poses a genuine problem (Frankfurt 1998b: 81). In fact, this is precisely what prompts Frankfurt to develop the concept of second-order desires, since he abandons the idea that anything external to the will can be action-guiding (Ibid: 94)[5].

Just like him, Bellazzi and Boyneburgk do not address any substantial concept of the good. This is what forces them to resort to the concept of second-order desires in order to present the virtues as action-guiding. It is also the reason why they are primarily concerned with how the turn towards the virtues can help cope with the limitations experienced from government measures, rather than reconstructing compliance with measures as acknowledgments of duties towards others. Thereby they risk losing sight of the distinctively moral aspects of the debate, such as intrinsic worth, objectivity, and other-directedness of moral demands. I grant that they presuppose that moral demands have these features (Bellazzi and Boyneburgk 2020: 8). But they cannot explain why they do and how this fact constitutes reasons to act on these demands. And I grant that they introduce the concept of second-order desires to accommodate for a concept of freedom, so that virtuous actions appear not as limitations to freedom but as expressions of it (ibid.: 7). But this is only necessary under the assumption that freedom of the will includes the freedom to act against the demands of virtue. However, as I made clear, this is not a real possibility for virtuous agents. So, Frankfurt's concept, is not only alien to virtue ethics, it also a reacts to a problem that is not as salient[6].

It is the lack of a substantial concept of the good that gives rise to the voluntarism and individualism of these approaches, for the absence of such a concept requires to locate the action-guidingness of virtues "within" the agent. But for solidarity or any virtue, this is neither desirable nor necessary if we can link it

to the good of others, thereby showing that it is action-guiding because it is other-regarding.

As I mentioned, virtue ethics establishes a connection between moral goodness and facts about the human life. I understand virtues as character traits that correspond to characteristic patterns of human experience. Virtues dispose agents to confront these experience according to reason (Nussbaum 1988: 35; McPherson 2020: 52). For instance, uneven distribution of resources is a characteristic experience in a human life, and we have to ask ourselves how to respond to it. To respond correctly, then, is to exercise generosity. "But then this means that one's behavior falls, willy nilly, within the sphere of the Aristotelian virtue, in each case" (Nussbaum 1988: 36).

Identifying the sphere to which solidarity corresponds allows to identify the moral demands that arise from the virtue of solidarity, as well as the ways in which we can fall short of meeting these demands.

Galang et al. (2020: 1) see solidarity as a commitment to a common good, resulting in "the awareness of the need for interdependence among individuals". Not only do we usually depend and rely on others to realize our projects and plans, often those projects and plans are not those of a single person to which others would then contribute. Rather they are common projects and plans from the beginning. Consider a group of long-time friends on a hiking tour: each of them is carrying a considerable weight. Eventually, one injures a foot and cannot keep walking and simultaneously carry their luggage. The others distribute the luggage of the injured person among each other so that everyone carries what they can, and the injured person can walk without additional weight.

It is natural to describe this as an exercise of solidarity. The friends are dedicated to a common good: it is not just that they go together in order to make it

easier, it belongs to the goodness of their experience to spend this time together. This requires each of them to contribute in a way that fits their possibilities. The respective persons' strengths and weaknesses need consideration in assessing what they are required to do. This is precisely the reason for which the persons in our example re-distribute the weight. The circumstances change in such a way that one person's possibilities diminish, and the others have to fill in.

This pictures the relevant sphere of experience to which solidarity corresponds: humans are dependent on each other, therefore it is in our power to make others hurt or flourish, and this grounds our moral position. Spelling this out requires to shift the conceptual framework of morality. Goodin (1985) takes an important step towards this. Discussing a number of paradigmatic moral relationships, he argues that, even when agents can decide whether or not to enter into a moral relationship, the obligation does not arise from entering. It is the fact that the agents involved become vulnerable to another person which creates obligations.

> Sometimes the relationship seems to arise out of natural necessity, other times out of social conventions, still other times out of voluntary choice. What is clear and constant throughout these many examples is that it is vulnerability, however engendered, that plays the crucial role in generating special responsibilities (Goodin 1985: 107).

While Goodin is not a virtue-ethicist, MacIntyre frames his discussion in terms of human well-being which typically is in the hands of others. According to him, the human life-form is fully actualized once we become independent practical reasoners. But for that, humans depend on others (MacIntyre 1999: 83).

This is, in the first instance, meant in a very material and concrete way: infants need nurture from others to survive all the threats to their fragile life. They also need care to develop the capacities to acquire reasons and to act and reflect on them (ibid: 69f). The fact that, at some point in their life, everyone is completely

dependent on others, places everyone in a network of relationships to others (ibid: 73). "We have all received care (albeit to varying degrees) at different stages of our lives, and MacIntyre argues that this implicates us in a community of reciprocal care[7]" (Friedrich 2020: 107). He takes family relationships as the paradigmatic case of such relationships but he remarks that this network extends to the entire community on whose care one depends, so that we can include, say, teachers, doctors, friends, and more (MacIntyre 1999: 99).

He establishes such relationships primarily in terms of a gradual growth into an independent practical reasoner. His conception of mutual dependence therefore is essentially diachronic. This is important because it allows him to reject an account of actions from acknowledged dependence as *do-ut-des*-transactions (ibid: 99f). However, I do not think we should take him to say that interdependence can exist solely diachronically, and I am going to show that we do not need to read him that way. In fact, it is a crucial aspect of the account of solidarity I will develop here, that it can express the acknowledgment of synchronic dependence.

Apart from a commitment to virtue ethics, there are parallels between Goodin and MacIntyre. Goodin, too, begins with duties in the context of family relationships that arise from the need to care for infants, but he immediately extends the grounding of moral duties in vulnerability to relationships between adults (Goodin 1985: 33f)[8]. Other than MacIntyre, though, he does not see duties grounded in these relationships as essentially reciprocal.

Both draw attention to important aspects of the same phenomenon. A synthesis of the two, then, provides us with the notion of a network of mutual interdependence which permeates the entire course of a human life and connects agents with an entire community: we constantly have to give because we are in the position to give, and do receive because we are in need of receiving, and we are thereby entitled to receive and required to give.

Humans depend on others in order to become independent practical reasoners. Yet, the independence is never absolute. Even those who successfully matured into independent practical reasoners are only independent in that regard. They remain dependent on others. Furthermore, a person who has become an independent practical reasoner rarely cuts off all former relationships of dependence completely, as MacIntyre himself concedes:

> [P]ractical reasoners enter the adult world with relationships, experiences, attitudes, and capacities that they bring with them from childhood and adolescence and that always to some significant, and often to a very large degree they are unable to discard and disown (MacIntyre 1999: 82)[9].

Receiving care from those on whom one depends is thus not only a necessary condition for the capacity to form a conception of the good life through independent practical reasoning, it can also contribute to the content of this conception because persons may come to view their contributions to relationships of interdependence as worthwhile[10].

Relationships of dependence are asymmetrical in three ways. (1) We cannot return the exact same that we have received. This is most obvious in the case of parenthood and infancy, but we also saw how it applies to cases of less radical dependence. (2) We might not need to return to those from whom we have received, but may have to give to others (MacIntyre 1999: 126). Still, insofar as we are virtuous, it expresses our acknowledgment that we once have received. (3) The giving and receiving does not take the shape of equivalent return because needs and dependencies vary[11].

As a consequence of these asymmetries and their interrelatedness, MacIntyre argues that contributions to the network of interdependence take the shape of "uncalculating giving" (MacIntyre 1999: 121) which merges two virtues: generosity and justice. He claims that there is no English term for this and refers to the Lakota term *Wancantognaka*:

> a generosity that I owe to all those others who also owe it to me. [...] Because I owe it, to fail to exhibit it is to fail in respect to justice; because what I owe is uncalculating giving, to fail to exhibit it is also to fail in respect to generosity (ibid.: 120f)[12].

To acknowledge interdependence is to acknowledge that I am dependent on others and am likely to have others depend on me, and this is to acknowledge that I am called upon to give. But this giving needs to be uncalculating because I never know what or how much I might be able to give or in need to receive. As long as I am able to give, I give what I can, in the expectation that I will receive what I need once I am in need. This maps on to the concept of solidarity proposed by Galang et al., so we can understand solidarity in terms of MacIntyres "virtues of acknowledged dependence". Another is what he calls in reference to Aquinas *misericordia (MacIntyre: 123f)*[13], the virtue of being responsive to extreme suffering of others. Here too, MacIntyre argues, the point is that the perpetuation of the network of interpersonal relationships relies on this virtue because the persons involved in the network never know whether they are going to be in need of acts of *misericordia* themselves. Importantly, *misericordia* is to be understood as a virtue and not a sentiment because only as a virtue it can produce the right actions (ibid.: 124).

I mentioned that, for virtuous agents, contributions to the network of interdependence can appear as intrinsically and not just instrumentically good. How is that possible? MacIntyre distinguishes between goods that are external to practices and goods that are internal to them. External goods are only contingently linked to excellence in a practice, such as the wealth and fame a master artist might enjoy (MacIntyre 1981: 31). Internal goods are conceptually linked to excellence in the respective practice.

> We call them internal for two reasons: first, as I have already suggested, because we can only specify them in terms of chess or some other game of that specific kind and by means of examples from such games [...]; and secondly because they can only be identified and recognized by the experience of participating in the practice in question (Ibid.: 30f).

Not only are virtues necessary to achieve internal goods of practices, these goods are only recognizable as goods from within the practice, so the possession of virtues puts agents in a position to appreciate the virtuous pursuit of excellence as worthwhile[14].

To conclude: acting virtuously is acting well, and this is the reason why virtuous agents act virtuously. Since the human condition is characterized to an important extent by dependence, and the virtues enable humans to see their dependence as moral reasons, adopting the virtues of acknowledged dependence transcends the distinction between egoism and altruism. The goods of these virtues "can only be mine insofar as they are also those of others" (MacIntyre 1999: 119).

Acknowledging Dependence in the Pandemic

The virtues that del Castillo and Galang et al. see as especially salient in the pandemic, solidarity and compassion, can be understood as the virtues of acknowledged dependence. I will now show how measures and precautions such as mask-wearing, contact-reduction, and vaccination arise from acknowledged dependence.

First, their main function is to protect others. While masks tend to reduce chances of infection for the wearer, they mostly protect others from infection in case the wearer is unknowingly infected (Pan et al. 2021: 727f; Ueki et al. 2020: 4). For isolation and vaccination it is not that obvious that agents take these measures for the sake of others. Individuals might chose isolation and vaccination to reduce their own chances of infection and severe illness. But as acts of self-interest, they would not be performed from acknowledged dependence and therefore cannot count as exercises of solidarity:

> In the context of the pandemic merely applying practical wisdom to one's own well-being while not simultaneously considering others' misfortune could not be upheld, for example. Nor would it be virtuous to rely on the courage and compassion of others without reciprocating (Moulin-Stożek, Kurian, and Nikolova 2021: 8).

Furthermore, the conditions need to be such that it is actually possible to comply with those measures. Persons with precarious jobs, who are in danger of losing payment or even their workplace when they are sick or self-isolate, have a strong incentive not to comply. To change that, they need support from their employer, public institutions, or their network of friends, family, and neighbors. And this, clearly, requires the acknowledgment of interdependence and uncalculating giving.

Finally, reference to mere self-interest does not exhaust descriptions of compliance because, as I already noted, contributing to networks of mutual interdependence is essentially reciprocal. Therefore, "crises such as the pandemic show that ‹‹self-regarding›› and ‹‹other-regarding›› virtues cannot be so easily separated. Another person's infection or incapacitation is readily going to impact one's own" (Ibid.: 7).

How can we understand these actions as expressions of uncalculating giving? MacIntyre argues that one important way to become aware of our obligation to those who depend on us is to imagine us in their place: "Of the brain-damaged, of those almost incapable of movement, of the autistic, of all such we have to say: this could have been us" (MacIntyre 1999: 100). We usually become independent practical reasoners if those on whom we depend live up to the demands grounded in this dependence. But due to the contingencies of our embodied condition, things still might go wrong, even if everyone does their part. Imagining us in the position of those for whom things have gone wrong gives us a sense of what we owe to them. In the pandemic, if everything goes as it should,

everyone has a reasonable chance to stay safe. This depends largely on compliance with precautions and measures. Alas, not everyone complies, and even then each individual could, due to some unfortunate circumstances, catch an infection or transmit the disease. By acknowledging this, we can come to see compliance with measures as expressions of solidarity: I depend on others to comply in order to be safe from infection, and others depend on me. Imagining myself in the place of someone less fortunate who caught an infection or apprehending the possibility of becoming infected creates an awareness of what I owe to those who are ill and those who could become ill due to my negligence or lack of care. Similarly, by imagining myself in the place of those who need to isolate, I can come to see that I owe them support. In that these actions mean caring, they can be called giving. This giving needs to be uncalculating because I do not give to anyone specific, simply because I do not know whom I might spare infection, death, or long-term symptoms. If I do not know to whom I give, it makes no sense to expect an equivalent return. For the same reason, I cannot expect a return from the same person to whom I give. Furthermore, some may not be able to give, for instance because they are immunocompromised and cannot get a vaccination, or have a respiratory disease which prevents them from wearing a mask. Similarly, I might be required help someone who has to isolate, even though I am unlikely to find myself in the same situation. Provided I am virtuous, in all these actions I am uncalculatingly giving to everyone and anyone who depends on me, that is, I am generously and justly contributing to the network of mutual dependence[15]. Yet, I can justifiedly expect those on whom I depend to return, to the extent that they are able to give. So, compliance with precautions and measures or supporting those who are afflicted in any way are pandemic-specific exercises of the virtue that I identified as solidarity.

Conclusion

I tried to provide a more substantial basis for the role of the virtues in the pandemic, arguing that solidarity is a central virtue the situation requires.[16] I explained which demands it places on us and how acting on those virtues bears on a common good. However, further work is necessary in order to disentangle the various lines of thought that run through the discussions around the virtues in public health and the pandemic.

I do not develop a professional ethics for health care workers. Neither do I talk about decision-makers who hold power or authority.[17] The moral demands I am concerned with arise from the sheer belonging to a community of human beings. Still, the discussion of interdependence and solidarity can shed light on more special areas – as Friedrich (2020) shows. The public depends in a special way on those upholding the infrastructure of public health. This creates special demands on their side, but it also constitutes special duties towards them from the side of the public. Decision-makers have special duties which concern relations of dependence, not only because the population depends in a special way on agents endowed with power, but also because an important part of their duties is to make sure that the virtues of acknowledged dependence can be properly exercised, yielding the results they are supposed to yield.

Solidarity is a virtue of acknowledged dependence. This dependence waxes and wanes and changes over the course of a life, but always remains central to it. I argued that mutual dependence creates a good that is no longer that of a specific person, but of the community as a whole. This mutual dependence is an integral part of the human life-form. Solidarity is therefore directed at the good life for humans and thereby action-guiding for virtuous agents.

To exercise solidarity is to perpetuate a network of interdependence that constitutes the community in which one is inevitably bound up. Insofar as virtues

are means between extremes, insufficient solidarity means to refuse to give where one has received, to be a freeloader. Excessive solidarity would be to give more than needed, which is a failure insofar as the giver might remain without anything left to give when it is required (MacIntyre 1999: 126)[18].

Mask-wearing, isolation, and vaccination can be exercises of uncalculating giving in the context of a community in which everyone owes this uncalculating giving to everyone else. To act from solidarity in the pandemic is to act on the insight that "[n]o-one is safe until everyone is safe" (Wellby et. al. 2021).

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[1] This aspect, which is often cited as a theoretical advantage over rule-ethics, is most salient to my point. Others are e. g. virtue ethics' rejection of "principilism" and its emphasis on the subtleties of moral situations. (Papouli 2018: 11; Fahlquist 2019: 214f)

[2] I cannot rehearse the arguments for a relation between the demands of virtue, the good life, and the human life-form here. Accepting this is part of the presupposition of a commitment to virtue ethics stipulated in the introduction. For approaches to establish this relation see e. g. Foot (2001: Ch. 2 and 3) or Thompson (2004).

[3] This is clearly not the place for an in-depth discussion of virtue ethics' moral ontology and epistemology. I defer to McDowell (1998) here, especially the discussion in §§ 3 and 4.

[4] Or, at any rate, they would argue that the range for meaningful application of this question is limited to the difference between virtue and continence, and "for Aristotle, continence is distinct from virtue, and just as problematic as incontinence" (McDowell 1998: 55). Virtue does not mean to always choose what is good over another option, but rather that such situations do not even appear as requiring a choice.

[5] I will break off the discussion of Frankfurt's position here, because it is only relevant to my point insofar as Bellazzi and Boyneburgk draw on it. For support of a voluntarist reading of Frankfurt as well as critique and replies, see e.g. Scanlon (2002).

[6] These lines of thought or Hughes' (2020) point that a virtue-ethical framework can help resolve moral conflicts, seem to conceive of virtues as primarily self-regarding instead of other-regarding. In that case, they fall within the range of approaches that Moulin-Stożek, Kurian, and Nikolova (2021: 2, 5-7) label "individualist", arguing that the focus on self-regarding virtues not only obfuscates the relation between their moral demands and the solution to a global problem, but also tends to shift responsibilities from institutions to individuals.

[7] This is, both, a descriptive claim about how agents usually come to acknowledge what they owe to each other, as well as a normative claim about how they should come to acknowledge it. Clearly, it is possible to arrive at these conclusions without the relevant past experiences, and it is possible to have these experiences without taking them as grounds for moral demands. But the latter is a moral failure.

[8] Verena Pröll convinced me that further conceptual clarification may be likely to show that vulnerability and dependence ought not to be conflated this easily. For the purpose of my discussion, however, I am setting this problem aside.

[9] Here we see how his account allows for the introduction of synchronic dependence.

[10] Spelling this out would require to take MacIntyre's point a step further, but I believe it would still be consistent with his overall approach.
[11] Similarly Goodin (1985: 38).
[12] The text gives us no clue as to why MacIntyre does not consider solidarity as the appropriate term here, but further discussion will support my reading of *Wancantognaka* as solidarity.
[13] MacIntyre leaves the term untranslated to avoid associations with "pity".
[14] Since MacInytre develops his account of dependence because he is dissatisfied with his attempt to ground virtues in practice-internal goods (MacIntyre 1999: x), there is a tension here. I believe it can be resolved by treating the goods actualized through virtues of acknowledged dependence not as instrumental, but as constitutive: there is no external standpoint to ground the demands of virtue, but when a person adopts the continuation of the network of interdependence as part of their good life, they come to see the virtues of acknowledged dependence as intrinsically worthwhile (McPherson 2020: 41).
[15] The example of the immunocompromised shows why it is especially important that the giving is uncalculating, for the reasons that render one person unable to give are the same reasons for which they need others to give to them.
[16] I am, therefore, subscribing to a moralist view of solidarity against which (DuFord 2022) argues on the grounds that solidarity is present in groups that pursue morally bad ends. I cannot address this charges here. However, I note that virtue ethics admits of the possibility to exercise the virtues in the pursuit of bad ends.
[17] An attempt to make the transition from individual ethics to politics and governance while remaining true to a framework of human nature and well-being could draw on the "Capability Approach" that especially Nussbaum has expanded on.
[18] Regardless of the systematic significance it has for Aristotle, contemporary virtue ethics rarely discusses the Golden-Mean-conception.

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