

Understanding Dependency
in the Work of Eva Feder Kittay and Alasdair MacIntyre

by
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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis offers a systematic exploration of Eva Feder Kittay's and Alasdair MacIntyre's perspectives on dependency, primarily through a comparison of their work in *Love's Labor* and *Dependent Rational Animals* respectively. While Kittay and MacIntyre share what I call a "care concern" (namely, an understanding of the importance of the reality of dependency in human lives), their differing ethical frameworks of a care-ethics-informed liberalism and Aristotelian-Thomistic virtue ethics lead to different conceptions of dependency and different recommendations for responding to that reality.

In Ch. 1, I compare Kittay's and MacIntyre's accounts of dependency from within their ethical frameworks and argue that their attempts to integrate care concerns into ethical frameworks which do not usually contain them leads to parallel sources of potential self-contradiction. In Ch. 2, I compare the two theorists' large-scale recommendations for responding to dependency, highlighting the ways that their central disagreement about the merits of liberalism and liberal government paves the way for their differing recommendations, specifically Kittay's focus on governmental monetary support for dependency workers and MacIntyre's focus on mid-sized communities. In Ch. 3, I build a conceptual framework to highlight three shared concepts in Kittay's and MacIntyre's interpersonal ethics: 1) uncalculating care, 2) expanded (or community-based) reciprocity, and 3) the role of the emotions and desires in moral action. I argue that these similarities provide both Kittay and MacIntyre with robust interpersonal frameworks which are responsive to our moral intuitions about care relationships and so avoid some of the pitfalls of other ethical frameworks. In Ch. 4, I ask broader questions about collaborations between ethical frameworks, using my work in this thesis as a backdrop. I put forth and illustrate three models of collaboration: 1) the critique model, 2) the learning model, and 3) the hybrid model. Finally, I use the work of this thesis to enter into conversations about the relationship between care ethics and virtue ethics. I argue specifically that care ethics cannot be subsumed under virtue ethics without losing some of its central and unique features (namely, its focus on care as the central ethical concept and its relational ontology) and that we can turn to MacIntyre's work on traditions to investigate the relationship between an ethic which has care concerns and a care ethic.

Keywords: Alasdair MacIntyre, care concerns, care ethics, collaboration, dependency, ethical frameworks, Eva Feder Kittay, liberalism, virtue ethics

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Dedication

To Alasdair MacIntyre (1929-2025), may he rest in peace.

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Introduction

In 1999, Eva Feder Kittay and Alasdair MacIntyre both published books discussing the importance of acknowledging human dependency in moral theory (*Love's Labor* and *Dependent Rational Animals* respectively). They both criticize prevailing ethical theories for their lack of attention to dependency, argue that it is a key feature of human experience, and offer a picture of what ethics would look like when reinvigorated with the concept of dependency. This parallel is especially interesting because the two philosophers come from different ethical traditions: Kittay considers herself a care theorist, and MacIntyre considers himself a virtue ethicist. Despite the difference in framework, MacIntyre and Kittay rely on and influence each other's work.¹ Kittay's and MacIntyre's treatments of dependency are also sometimes referenced together.² However, there has not been much substantial literature comparing these treatments or considering them in light of the theorists' differing ethical frameworks.³ This thesis seeks to be a systematic overview of their work on dependency in relationship to each other (focusing especially on *Love's Labor* and *Dependent Rational Animals*). I will compare their discussion of the nature of dependency, how it impacts ethical commitments, and how it relates to the ethical frameworks within which they work. I will discuss what Kittay's and MacIntyre's approaches share in common and where they diverge in order to examine both works in a new light. I will discuss both what each philosopher can learn from the other as well as places where one person's work uncovers weakness or unanswered questions in the other person's work.

¹ Kittay references MacIntyre in several essays (including in Kittay, Eva Feder, "A Theory of Justice as Fair Terms of Social Life Given Our Inevitable Dependency and Our Inextricable Interdependency," In *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, edited by Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington (Oxford University Press, 2015), 51-71.) and leans on several of his concepts explicitly in a later book, Eva Feder Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter: The Value and Care of Disabled Minds* (Oxford University Press, 2019). MacIntyre thanks Kittay for the influence of her work on his and for suggesting edits to the book in the preface to *Dependent Rational Animals* (Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Carus Publishing Company, 1999), xii.).

² Similarities in Kittay's and MacIntyre's work on dependency and disability are discussed in E Frank Fitch, "Moral Philosophy, Disability, and Inclusive Education," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 40 (2009): 167-77, <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ864319> and Simon van der Weele et al., "What Is the Problem of Dependency? Dependency Work Reconsidered," *Nursing Philosophy* 22, no. 2 (September 15, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1111/nup.12327>.

³ The closest I have found to a comparison of *Love's Labor* and *Dependent Rational Animals* is a joint review of their work by Roger S. Gottlieb in *Tikkun*. While it does summarize the key aspects of each text faithfully and offer some interesting commentary based on the author's personal experience as the father of a disabled child, it (understandably, given its length) mostly skims the surface of the possible conversation.

In this introduction, I will offer brief intellectual biographies of our two theorists, focusing on their work on vulnerability and dependency and placing that work within the wider context of their thought. In this section, I will also introduce the concept of a “care concern,” which will be important in later chapters of this thesis. Then, I will outline the chapters of this thesis, previewing the key themes and questions I will ask in each section.

An Introduction to the Work of MacIntyre and Kittay

Alasdair MacIntyre is a Thomistic-Aristotelian virtue theorist. His work offers meta-ethical arguments for the superiority of virtue ethics over the modern and contemporary ethical theories of deontology and consequentialism, explores the nature of virtue, intellectual traditions, and communities, and describes the nature of certain virtues and their impact on how individuals and communities act. *Dependent Rational Animals* largely falls into this third category, as it seeks to build a virtue ethic which is responsive to the realities of vulnerability and dependency. In order to do this properly, however, MacIntyre engages with questions in the second category— around human flourishing and how relationships and communities relate to flourishing. *After Virtue* (originally 1981, using third edition, 2007), to which I turn during this thesis for context on *Dependent Rational Animals*, falls more strongly into the first two categories. In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre argues that ethical theories without grounding in a teleology (or a sense of human flourishing) cannot hold moral sway and argues instead for a return to virtue ethics and an understanding of human beings as communally discovering what it means to live well.

MacIntyre’s interest in vulnerability and dependency is what I will call in this thesis a “care concern”—which is some focus on the realities of care, dependency, vulnerability, needs, and resulting relationships in a way which is more pronounced than and distinctive from the typical treatments of these topics in Western philosophy. I use this terminology to distinguish having care concerns from building a care ethic (although everyone who builds a care ethic will have care concerns). While MacIntyre happens to be directly inspired by care ethics in his attention to vulnerability and dependency (as he states in the first chapter of *Dependent Rational Animals*), he is not part of the care ethics tradition and is not attempting to be.⁴ As I will argue more in depth later, it is possible to have care concerns (and, more weakly, to notice and comment upon vulnerability, for

⁴ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 2-3.

example) without being a care theorist. So I will use this term throughout the thesis to refer more broadly to instances of attention to the realities of care, etc., whether these instances come from a care theorist or not.

How does an Aristotelian virtue theorist come to be interested in the care concerns of vulnerability and dependency? In his preface to *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre describes the work as “not only a continuation of, but also a correction of some of my earlier enquiries.”⁵ He states that in *After Virtue*, he sought to give an account of Aristotle's virtue theory without reference to Aristotle's “metaphysical biology,” or his understanding of the animal realities of human beings.⁶ He argues that although much of Aristotle's biology is mistaken, his emphasis on the importance of the animal nature of human beings cannot be overlooked in ethics because we cannot accurately describe human flourishing without knowing what kind of thing human beings are. MacIntyre argues that once we pay attention to our animalness (and our similarities to other intelligent animals) we can develop a more accurate understanding of our specific flourishing as human beings and also point us to “the nature and extent of human vulnerability and disability” and its place in moral theory.⁷ Interestingly, although Aristotle strongly acknowledges the animal nature of human beings, he is not sensitive to vulnerability, dependency, and the moral consequences of these realities. MacIntyre argues at different points throughout *Dependent Rational Animals* that Aristotle's failure to acknowledge and account for these realities is an inconsistency in Aristotle's work.

In his preface to *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre points to another influence for his focus on dependency: Thomas Aquinas. MacIntyre argues that Aquinas is much more sensitive to the realities of dependency than Aristotle and so his work on Aristotle and his adaptation of Aristotle for the Christian context corrects Aristotle's virtue theory to account for this acknowledgement.⁸ MacIntyre leans on Aquinas' conceptions of the virtues when building his virtues of acknowledged dependence.⁹ For these reasons, we cannot describe MacIntyre's work in *Dependent Rational Animals* as solely Aristotelian—we must also recognize his important critiques of Aristotle and his debt to Aquinas' recognition of dependency as well.

⁵ Ibid, x.

⁶ Ibid, x.

⁷ Ibid, x.

⁸ Ibid, xi.

⁹ Ibid, 120-121.

Eva Feder Kittay is a care theorist who is especially concerned with the relationship between care and liberalism, the importance of acknowledging dependency for the (usually female) caregiver (who she usually calls dependency worker), and how care relates to disability. Her 1999 book *Love's Labor* discusses how a failure to acknowledge the realities of dependency, the importance of dependency work, and the value of dependency relationships in our lives undermines the initiatives of equality in liberal society. She argues for the incorporation of dependency and care into liberal ethical frameworks (using Rawls as an example) and discusses the impact this incorporation would have on our understanding of human relationships and society, especially public policy. Kittay continued to publish widely on care theory and disability after *Love's Labor*, and twenty years later, she published another book, *Learning from My Daughter* (2019). This book takes a more interpersonal look at the importance of dependency relationships, and nature of care, and how care-focused ethical theories might answer different thorny questions about dependency from her perspective both as a philosopher and as a mother of a profoundly disabled daughter. While this thesis will focus mostly on Kittay's work in *Love's Labor*, I use *Learning from my Daughter* as a supplemental text throughout and focus more thoroughly on its insights in Chapter 3 of this thesis, which discusses interpersonal relationships. I will also pull from other essays written by Kittay to supplement where needed.

Kittay's interest in questions of vulnerability, dependency, and care relationships comes straightforwardly from her interest in feminist care ethics. However, her relationship to liberalism is less straightforward, and unpacking the relationship between Kittay's commitment to care ethics and her interest in retaining many aspects of liberalism will be a main theme of this thesis. In *Love's Labor*, Kittay utilizes care ethics' realist approach to dependency to critique current forms of liberalism and build a new connection-based notion of equality. As Kittay clarifies in *Learning from My Daughter*, she relies on the care ethics tradition because she sees it as the best framework for responding to the realities of dependency and vulnerability: "I have come to see an ethics of care as exactly the moral philosophy needed to deal with inevitable dependency and to include disabled people, their families, and carers fully within the scope of ethical inquiry."¹⁰ However, *Love's Labor*, when considered alone, looks to me like a care-concern liberalism—where Kittay is utilizing the

¹⁰ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 136.

insights of care ethics to create a better version of liberalism, which is more responsive to the realities of human life and so better able to meet liberalism's goal of equality.¹¹

Kittay seems to maintain that the concerns of care ethics can be subsumed under a (modified) liberalism, perhaps because she sees the egalitarian ideal that she wants to maintain as necessarily tied to liberalism.¹² *Love's Labor*'s focus makes Kittay seem more like a liberal who is interested in care ethics than a care theorist who wants to utilize some aspects of liberalism. This perspective becomes stronger when considering Kittay's work in *Love's Labor* alongside MacIntyre's, because it seems that the work that virtue ethics is doing in MacIntyre's work is very similar to the work that liberalism is doing in Kittay's. However, *Learning from My Daughter* is a much more explicitly care ethics text, and here Kittay builds her own conception of care ethics which rarely mentions liberalism (although, as I argue, still relies on some liberal concepts, like in her description of flourishing). Additionally, when viewing Kittay's work as a whole, it becomes clear that the best way to read Kittay is as a care theorist. It seems to me that the jury is still out on the best way to describe Kittay's work in *Love's Labor* specifically, and this is important for us considering that *Love's Labor* is the text we will draw from most in this thesis. However, it is important to note that Kittay sees herself as part of the care ethics tradition, and others within the tradition see her work in a similar light.

A Brief Overview of the Thesis

In Chapter 1, I will discuss how Kittay and MacIntyre conceive of the reality of dependency and the general ethical commitments which arise from acknowledging this reality. I will also discuss how Kittay and MacIntyre understand their relationships to liberalism and virtue ethics respectively, given that they criticize these frameworks for typically ignoring dependency and yet still want to retain aspects of them. I will argue that each has a potential source of inconsistency within their theory which results from the attempt to integrate dependency into frameworks which do not usually leave room for it.

¹¹ Kittay describes the work of *Love's Labor* primarily as "addressing the elusiveness of women's quest for equality" (Eva Feder Kittay, "Love's Labor Revisited," *Hypatia* 17, no. 3 (August 2002): 237–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2002.tb00951.x>, 237.).

¹² She does not seem to defend this notion explicitly, but as we have seen, she is keen to maintain the notion of equality in general and does so in her work through a liberal framework. In addition, it seems that she also wants to retain the liberal notion of equality that she critiques, but only for some people. We will discuss this potential problem in Ch. 1.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Kittay's and MacIntyre's profoundly different suggestions for large-scale responses to dependency: Kittay argues for governmental paid support for all dependency workers, while MacIntyre focuses on the importance of mid-sized communities. I argue that these differences spring from underlying commitments rooted in their ethical frameworks. While describing the recommendations of each, I use the work of the other to uncover places where the theories could be refined, sharpened, and clarified.

In Chapter 3, I argue that Kittay's and MacIntyre's interpersonal ethics in response to dependency share at least three key themes in common: uncalculating care, expanded reciprocity, and the importance of emotions in moral responses. I argue that these shared themes create an interpersonal ethic that is more attuned to our moral instincts about and actual experiences of interpersonal care than many mainstream ethical frameworks and so avoids some of the problems these theories face in interpersonal spaces.

Chapter 4 zooms out to discuss the nature of Kittay's and MacIntyre's frameworks in relationship to each other and what we can learn more generally about collaboration between ethical frameworks with similar interests but different core commitments. Here, I introduce three models of collaboration between ethical theories (the critique model, the learning model, and the hybrid model) and illustrate their uses with examples from MacIntyre and Kittay. I will also contribute to the conversation about the relationship between virtue ethics and care ethics here by arguing that the relationship MacIntyre's and Kittay's work suggests that we cannot subsume care ethics into virtue ethics without losing key aspects of what makes care ethics distinctive, including its focus on care as the sole ethical standard and its relational ontology. Then, I will investigate MacIntyre's relationship to care ethics in order to argue that having care concerns is not enough to make an ethical framework a care ethic. I put forth MacIntyre's concept of an intellectual tradition as a helpful way to distinguish between a care ethic and an ethic which incorporates care concerns.

This thesis serves as an introductory exploration of the similarities and differences between Kittay's and MacIntyre's work on dependency. Throughout the thesis, I use close readings of the work of both philosophers to build an imagined conversation between the two. As I do so, I build up a conceptual architecture to articulate key themes in the dependency space, including by introducing the concepts of *care concerns*, *partially positive conceptions of the good*, *community-based reciprocity*, and more. I also demonstrate methods of collaboration between ethical frameworks

throughout the thesis, which I then explicitly discuss in the final chapter. The work of this thesis ideally contributes to the conversations around the relationship between care ethics, virtue ethics, and liberalism, around the difficulties of attempting to introduce care concerns into an ethical framework, and around what ethical theorists might gain from collaboration with those outside of their ethical tradition.

Chapter 1: Conceptualizing Dependency

This chapter introduces how Kittay and MacIntyre understand the realities of vulnerability and dependency within the moral frameworks of care-concern liberalism and virtue ethics respectively.¹³ Both Kittay and MacIntyre ask the question: How would moral theory change if we were to take seriously the facts of human vulnerability and dependency?¹⁴ They seek to critique past proponents of liberalism, virtue ethics, and other moral theories for ignoring these realities, but, in the end, they both want to uphold their frameworks as best for responding to these realities. But because care-concern liberalism and virtue ethics are so different, the ways they conceptualize dependency are quite different. In this chapter, we will examine how these two philosophers situate dependency within their own frameworks, focusing on what aspects of the frameworks are emphasized and which need to be altered in order to account for these realities. In the latter half of this chapter, I will argue that Kittay's and MacIntyre's reliances on liberalism and virtue ethics respectively guides both of them to value certain types of independence, which may or may not be at odds with their shared goal of acknowledging and accounting for dependency.

Situating Dependency

Kittay: Equality in Dependency

Kittay introduces *Love's Labor* with a series of feminist critiques of the liberal or modern ideal of equality. One of these is the "dependency critique," through which she argues that liberal equality ignores human beings' inevitable dependencies. Kittay defines dependency as "lack[ing] certain sources of capacities, those essential to surviving and maintaining oneself."¹⁵ Dependencies,

¹³ As mentioned in the introduction, this chapter is mostly concerned with Kittay's *Love's Labor* and will use the "care-concern liberalism" model for understanding Kittay's work.

¹⁴ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 4; Eva Feder Kittay, *Love's Labor: Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency* (New York : Routledge, 1999), 19.

¹⁵ Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 46. Kittay does not explicitly use the word "vulnerability" very much in *Love's Labor*. Kittay's only discussion of vulnerability in *Love's Labor* is when she dialogues with Robert Goodin's "Vulnerability Model," which describes moral claims to specific others as resting on their vulnerability to our actions. Vulnerability in this sense is *relational*: Goodin and Kittay talk about being vulnerable *to the actions of another* (Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 54-62). Kittay calls both one's inability to provide for or care for oneself (what MacIntyre would call "vulnerability") *and* one's subsequent reliance on another to do this providing or caring (what MacIntyre would call "dependency") "dependency." Although I find this collision of two ideas to be somewhat unclear, I also find that, given the correlation of these two states in reality, this semantic decision does not deeply impact Kittay's clarity overall.

especially when ignored, prevent some people from “enter[ing] a competition for the goods of social cooperation on equal terms.”¹⁶ Kittay argues that this liberal erasure of dependency is especially harmful to women, who are currently doing the greater share of caring for dependents (or “dependency work”).¹⁷ Crucially, Kittay thinks that doing dependency work creates a “secondary dependency” in those who do it: “Those who care for dependents, who must put their own interests aside to care for one who is entirely vulnerable to their actions, enter the competition for social goods with a handicap.”¹⁸ We will see that this notion of secondary dependency is central to Kittay’s arguments about the issues which arise when dependency is ignored.

Kittay sees the notion of independence (on which the liberal notion of equality is built) to be a social construct, a “fiction” built to mask the reality of inevitable dependency: “The encounter with dependency is, I believe, rarely welcome to those fed an ideological diet of freedom, self-sufficiency, and equality.... But the deeper dependencies of infancy and early childhood, frail old age, disease and disability, do not vanish in a revolution. We have no lords to fight for this independence. So we have built fictions.”¹⁹ These fictions also mask the fact that not all relationships are transactional, and that many people find great meaning in relationships built on dependency: “The dependency critique maintains that a pie composed of the dreams and aspirations of men is not sufficiently nourishing. What is left out is just what is omitted when society is supposed to be an association of equals.”²⁰ Kittay maintains, in opposition, that human relationships, perhaps especially those which are not “an association of equals” are central to “our happiness and well-being.”²¹

¹⁶ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, xi.

¹⁷ We can still see this gender divide in caregiving today. A Commonwealth Fund 2023 International Health Policy Survey found that women were significantly more likely to be a caregiver to a member of their families in both the United States (where 22% of men and 26% of women surveyed were family caregivers) and in Canada (where 23% of men and 30% of women surveyed were family caregivers). Significant differences were also found in Sweden, Switzerland, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and Germany. Out of all these countries, only in the United States were women significantly more likely to consider this caregiving “very” or “extremely” stressful compared to men (40% of women compared to 29% of men). (Evan D. Gumas, Munira Z. Gunja, and Reginald D. Williams II, “The Unequal Weight of Caregiving: Women Shoulder the Responsibility in 10 Countries,” Commonwealth Fund, March 19, 2024, <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/blog/2024/unequal-weight-caregiving-women-shoulder-responsibility-10-countries>.)

¹⁸ Ibid, xi.

¹⁹ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 19; Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 5.

²⁰ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 14.

²¹ Ibid, 106.

Although Kittay is a harsh critic of this liberal notion of equality built on a fiction of independence, she wants to maintain the ideal of equality itself, as she sees it as essential to the future of “any progressive movement,” including feminism.²² Kittay’s goal is to build a new notion of equality, one which starts from a realism about human dependency: “The challenge...is to develop a moral theory which, while recognizing some fundamental moral parity of all, nonetheless recognizes and addresses inequalities of situation, capacities, and relationships.”²³ Kittay also clearly does not want to throw out liberalism altogether. Kittay continues to hold the ability to have involvement in the marketplace as a central goal for many lives, and she spends Part Two of *Love’s Labor* attempting to integrate dependency and care into a Rawlsian framework and (in Part Three) arguing for a more robust welfare system in the light of this integration. In other words, while she is a searing critic of most current forms of liberalism, she seeks to reform liberalism by means of care concerns: a realism about dependency and a focus on dependency relationships, rather than turning to a more sympathetic moral and political system or building a new one from scratch.

Kittay develops what she calls a “connection-based” equality: the basis for equality of all human beings is that “we are all some mother’s child.”²⁴ This notion asserts equality not on the basis of a property that each individual has (like reason, will, or freedom), but on a *relationship*. This shift in emphasis allows for dependency relationships to overcome market relationships as the paradigmatic moral relationship.²⁵ One of Kittay’s arguments for connection-based equality is that it is capable of advocating for needs of the cared-for without ignoring the needs of the carers. Carers, too, are some mother’s child, and as such, they deserve to be cared for as well.²⁶ Inspired by the practice of doulas caring for the mother of a child during childbirth and early infancy, Kittay calls the moral obligation to care for dependency workers “doulia.”²⁷ This obligation can also be thought of as fulfilling a type of reciprocity. By doing dependency work, a person provides a service to the

²² Ibid, xii.

²³ Ibid, 50.

²⁴ Ibid, 25. Kittay takes an expansive definition of “mothering,” which she uses to describe all good “caring for children” (Ibid, xiii-xiv). Here, Kittay is centering equality less on the fact that we all have a biological mother and more on the fact that we all have at least one person who should care for us in a certain way (namely, for our own sake and not because we have merited it). Kittay describes this in another place as: “someone in whom care has been invested, as none of us could survive, much less thrive, without care” (Kittay, “A Theory of Justice,” 51-71.)

²⁵ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 71.

²⁶ Ibid, 50.

²⁷ Ibid, 107.

community at large, and so the community has a responsibility to pay back that service in the form of caring for the dependency worker: “All dependency work, whether it is care for children, the ill, the aged or the disabled, must be recognized as social contributions which require reciprocation, not by the cared for but by a larger social circle in which the dependency relation is embedded.”²⁸ As such, connection based equality allows us to emphasize the needs of dependents without forsaking or overlooking the needs of those who care for them.

This connection-based notion of equality also protects dependency workers from exploitation in care relationships—like being expected to perform highly dangerous or immoral acts on behalf of a dependent, being treated unkindly or unfairly by the dependent, and being forced into non-consensual care relationships—by preventing them from being expected to do things which no (good) mother would expect her own child to do.²⁹ This perspective allows great responsibilities to be put on dependency workers (beyond what a voluntary market relationship would require, for example) without crossing over into dangerous territory like coercion or enslavement: “First and foremost, the obligation owed to a person who must defer her own interests and projects is that her responsibilities to another not be unjustly thrust upon her. To disregard such an obligation is to treat her as someone of lesser moral worth than either the person she cares for or those who placed her in the obliging position.”³⁰ Here, the source of the moral worth of the dependency worker is *relational*: the dependency worker is also some mother’s child.

As mentioned above, Kittay argues that dependency workers take on a “secondary dependency” because of the nature of their work. Namely, doing dependency work requires one to put aside or limit one’s own ability to enter into the competition for goods and often one’s personal desires or ambitions: “Her energies are channeled into the preservation and fruition of another. Her own needs, desires, and aspirations (in so far as these stand apart from the needs, desires, and aspirations of those for whom she cares) are set aside, deferred, or obliterated, as are the exercise of those capacities needed to enter the free competition for the benefits of social cooperation.”³¹ This reality of putting aside one’s own interests creates a dependency on a “provider,” who controls the

²⁸ Ibid, 141. Both Kittay’s and MacIntyre’s expanded notions of reciprocity will be discussed in detail in Ch. 3.

²⁹ Ibid, 60.

³⁰ Ibid, 65.

³¹ Ibid, 46-47.

dependency worker's (and the dependent's) access to the external goods they need to survive.³² Given that most dependency work is done by women, many women take on this secondary dependency, which, in the best case, limits their access to public life and, in the worst, makes them highly vulnerable to the whims and abuses of a corrupt provider.³³ The reality of secondary dependency, then, becomes a source of inequality between men and women and a mechanism of vulnerability. Kittay argues that these gendered features of secondary dependency means that it should be limited as much as possible: "It falls upon the larger social order to permit the flourishing and preservation of dependency relations by providing for the dependency worker without creating the secondary dependency so debilitating to women today."³⁴ A sizable part of *Love's Labor* is dedicated to identifying secondary dependencies and offering potential solutions to minimize them, as we will see in Ch. 2.

MacIntyre: Reason's Animality

MacIntyre starts his work on dependency, *Dependent Rational Animals*, with a wide-scale critique of Western philosophy. He argues that Western philosophy as a whole has developed a disregard for "the significance of the facts of affliction and dependence" and that this habit is "genuinely difficult to discard."³⁵ MacIntyre argues that this denial of dependence is rooted in a more profound denial of ourselves as animals and the centrality of the body to our reality.³⁶ He spends the first half of the book arguing that even our reason, which many (including MacIntyre) think of as the distinguishing factor between human beings and other animals, is an *animal* reason—and, in consequence, we can see the roots of this reason in the pre-rational abilities of other intelligent animals.³⁷ As he puts it: "our thinking is the thinking of one species of animal."³⁸ This reality is important for MacIntyre because it means that even as we focus on reason, we cannot ignore the reality of our animality.

³² Ibid, 44.

³³ Ibid, 46.

³⁴ Ibid, 71.

³⁵ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 4.

³⁶ Ibid, 4-5.

³⁷ Ibid, 5, 41, 57.

³⁸ Ibid, 5.

In order to remedy this problem in Western philosophy, MacIntyre turns back to Aristotle, because, as he puts it, “no philosopher has taken human animality more seriously.”³⁹ However, he also argues that Aristotle does not always follow through on the rightful consequences of his own metaphysical claims about human animality: an emphasis on our vulnerability and dependency. MacIntyre argues that Aristotle fails to follow through on the consequences of his own commitments because a) he does not consult the experience of those who would have experienced vulnerability and dependency the most profoundly in his time and place: women, slaves, servants, and manual laborers and b) he understands masculine virtue to involve minimizing one’s burden to and dependence on others.⁴⁰ So, even though Aristotle has the conceptual tools to create a philosophical acceptance of vulnerability and dependency, he, in practice, like many other philosophers after him, considers moral philosophy from the standpoint of “those who have taken themselves to be self-sufficiently superior” and not from the perspective of those who cannot afford this luxury.⁴¹ However, these practical problems do not stop MacIntyre from utilizing and building on much of Aristotle’s conceptual framework, even though, as he says, it involves “turning Aristotle against Aristotle.”⁴²

To build his notion of vulnerability, MacIntyre adopts an Aristotelian concept of flourishing. To flourish is “to develop the distinctive powers that [a member of a species] possesses *qua* member of that species.”⁴³ In the case of human beings, MacIntyre follows Aristotle in claiming that this distinctive power is (an animal) reason. Specifically for MacIntyre, it is “independent practical reasoning,” which is the prudential ability to judge what specific actions are virtuous in given situations, or to reason (with others) about the proper means to reach our end as human beings. Moving beyond Aristotle, MacIntyre argues that something or someone is vulnerable if there are contingencies which might prevent her from achieving flourishing: “When we identify the harms and dangers to which dolphins are exposed and the nature of their vulnerability to those harms and dangers, we presuppose a certain notion of dolphin flourishing, of what it would be for an individual dolphin to flourish....”⁴⁴ Vulnerability is always in reference to the achievement of flourishing. This

³⁹ Ibid, 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 6-7. We will discuss MacIntyre’s perspective on Aristotle’s concept of masculine virtue more fully in Ch. 4.

⁴¹ Ibid, 7.

⁴² Ibid, 8.

⁴³ Ibid, 64.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 63.

makes sense—I may not have the ability to jump three hundred feet in the air, but this lack of ability is not a *vulnerability* because jumping three hundred feet in the air pretty clearly does not make me more fully the type of thing that I am.

Flourishing is not guaranteed to human beings, far from it. There are many ways in which we might fail to reach independent practical reasoning, most of which are out of our control. Many of these ways, like our susceptibility to drought and famine, disability, and old age are because of our animality.⁴⁵ All of these contingencies are sources of vulnerability for us. In fact, MacIntyre argues that we are in some ways *more* vulnerable than other animals because our flourishing is more complex. More things have to go right for us to flourish.⁴⁶ Because every human being is susceptible to contingencies that would prevent flourishing, every human being is vulnerable, albeit to different extents. MacIntyre describes this reality as a scale of disability, along which all people exist: “Disability is a matter of more or less, both in respect to degree of disability and in respect of the time periods in which we are disabled. And at different periods of our lives we find ourselves, often unpredictably, at very different points on that scale.”⁴⁷ This idea of a scale of disability is very similar to Kittay’s idea of the fiction of independence—both stress the fact that vulnerability is the norm, not the exception, in human life.

MacIntyre argues that a large part of our vulnerability is that we cannot do many things, including reaching human flourishing, on our own. We are dependent on other people, during many times in life, just for survival, and we are always dependent on others to *become* and to *be* an independent practical reasoner. Firstly, as Kittay stresses too, we are often dependent on others throughout our lives just to meet our basic needs. If we cannot meet these basic needs, we certainly cannot flourish. In order to flourish, then, we need a baseline level of care during the times of life when this is necessary:

“If I am to flourish to the full extent that is possible for a human being, then my whole life has to be of a certain kind, one in which I not only engage in and achieve some measure of success in the activities of an independent practical reasoner, but also receive and have reasonable expectation of receiving the attentive care needed when I am very young, old and ill, or injured. So each of us achieves our good only if

⁴⁵ MacIntyre does not explicitly argue that we would be less vulnerable if we were less animal, but it seems to follow pretty directly from his list of vulnerabilities. There are ways in which we are vulnerable which have less to do with our bodies, but many of the most common and most pressing are bodily.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 68, 72.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 73.

and insofar as others make our good their good by helping us through periods of disability.”⁴⁸

This expectation of sustaining care, specifically that others will “make our good their good,” is a baseline requirement for achieving our flourishing.⁴⁹

But we are not just dependent on others to fulfill our basic needs. Secondly, MacIntyre argues that we cannot develop the virtues necessary to become independent practical reasoners without relationships with other people, usually adults (especially parents, but others necessarily as well) who are already independent practical reasoners. Independent practical reasoning involves many related abilities, most of which need to be learned and cultivated through the help of others. Some of the most important include: 1) to be able to stand back from our desires and evaluate them from an external point of view; 2) to evaluate and reflect on what counts as a good reason for pursuing an action; 3) to “enquire rationally what the pursuit of our good here and now requires;” and 4) to be able to reeducate our desires as needed to align with our good.⁵⁰ We are not born knowing how to do these things, and so we need help from others to develop these habits. For example, MacIntyre says that children often learn to differentiate between what they want in the moment and what is good for them more generally by hearing others apply this distinction to them by saying, for example: “Stop eating that! I know you like it, but it’s bad for you.”⁵¹ In summary of this point, MacIntyre states: “To become an effective independent practical reasoner is an achievement, but it is always one to which others have made essential contributions.”⁵² So, we are always dependent on others to become independent practical reasoners.

Support from others does not cease once we become independent practical reasoners; we also need it to *be* independent practical reasoners. Oftentimes we are beholden to others to correct us when we are wrong about the facts of a moral situation or when we are being swayed in our reasoning by an internal failing of our own.⁵³ Additionally and very importantly, MacIntyre argues that we cannot truly deliberate about the good except in a community of others who deliberate with us.⁵⁴ Thus,

⁴⁸ Ibid, 108.

⁴⁹ This idea of making another’s good your own sounds very similar to Kittay’s notion of dependency work as requiring one to put aside one’s personal desires and ambitions.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 83-84, 86-87.

⁵¹ Ibid, 70.

⁵² Ibid, 82.

⁵³ Ibid, 96.

⁵⁴ We will discuss this idea more fully in Ch. 2.

MacIntyre states: “There is no point in our development towards and in our exercise of independent practical reasoning at which we cease altogether to be dependent on practical others.”⁵⁵ If this is true, how is this practical reasoning *independent*? MacIntyre uses this word specifically to emphasize that, in the ideal condition, we are able to stand back the evaluations of others (even when we lean on them for support) and see if they are true. While we may often reason together with others, rely on others to point out faults in our reasoning, and sometimes adopt someone else’s reasoning as our own, we need to be able to endorse this reasoning *as our own* and offer to another an explanation for why we did action x and not action y in a particular situation: “By independence I mean both the ability and the willingness to evaluate the reasons for action advanced to one by others, so that one makes oneself accountable for one’s endorsements of the practical conclusions of others as well as one’s own conclusions.” Ideally, we do not just accept the reasoning of others on faith. We become accountable for our own reasoning.

MacIntyre’s central claim is that because we are so dependent on other people to flourish as human beings, we must consider those virtues which allow us to respond to each other’s dependencies (which he calls “virtues of acknowledged dependence”) to belong to “one and the same set of virtues” as the virtues which allow us to become independent practical reasoners.⁵⁶ We cannot develop the virtues of independent practical reasoning without depending on others, and we can best accept, acknowledge, and act rightly in response to our own dependencies and those of others when we are independent practical reasoners.⁵⁷ Thus, MacIntyre argues that we cannot understand our dependence, rationality, and animality apart from each other.⁵⁸

Allegiance to Frameworks and Valuing Independence

Kittay’s and MacIntyre’s work on dependency looks very structurally similar. First, they acknowledge human vulnerability and dependency, highlighting its importance in human life and therefore for moral questions. They decry the lack of attention to these realities in moral systems, including the moral systems towards which they remain sympathetic. Then, they defend the continued use of a specific moral system, despite its historical inadequacy in dealing with dependency, by citing

⁵⁵ Ibid, 97.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 5.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 85.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 5.

its strengths in other important areas and/or by remarking on its actual fitness to deal with this reality, despite failures in the past. Finally, both philosophers put forth attempts to discuss dependency from within the moral frameworks they prefer, both using concepts internal to the framework and moving beyond it to introduce new concepts as necessary.

One potential downside to this strategy is that Kittay and MacIntyre are both at risk of carrying baggage from these moral frameworks which makes them difficult to reconcile with a recognition of dependency. In both cases, the moral frameworks of liberalism and Aristotelian virtue ethics seem to require that Kittay and MacIntyre value certain forms of independence, specifically independences which are not universally or equally accessible to all. It is very possible that this value of independence and acceptance of dependence are mutually compatible. However, neither Kittay nor MacIntyre discuss directly whether these framework commitments to independence conflict with their acknowledgements of dependence. In this section, we will attempt to tease out some of these issues to understand how exactly dependency fits into these two frameworks and how these two philosophers view dependence: is it a mere acceptance of an inevitable harm? Or can we ever think of dependency as being or producing good?

Kittay's Market Independence

As we have discussed in this chapter, one of Kittay's central goals is to create a new notion of equality which acknowledges dependence and is inclusive of all human beings. She does this by emphasizing that we are all some mother's child. I will follow Kittay in describing this form of equality as *connection-based equality*. While Kittay is successful in putting forth and advocating for this notion of equality, she also seems to hang onto another notion of equality, one which follows from the liberal tradition: being able to engage in "the competition for goods."⁵⁹ I will call this second type of equality *liberal equality*.⁶⁰ Kittay utilizes this liberal equality most often when articulating the problem with secondary dependency, that dependency which is brought about by caring for a dependent. She argues, as we have seen, that secondary dependency is a *problem* because it prevents

⁵⁹ Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 39.

⁶⁰ It seems that Kittay is arguing that secondary dependency limits one's access to public life: being able to access goods for oneself, for example. Although Kittay does not always explicitly refer to the marketplace, she does often use words like "competition" and "bargaining position" that evoke the marketplace and a (liberal) understanding of individuals as (ideally) equal players vying for public goods via public competition (Ibid, 39, 46.).

dependency workers from approaching the public sphere in the same ways as those who do not do dependency work. Sometimes, she even defines secondary dependency in terms of a failure to reach liberal equality: “to be in a worse bargaining position is to be in a state of secondary dependency.”⁶¹ In other words, dependency workers are unequal to others under the liberal notion of equality, and they deserve to be liberally equal in this way.⁶²

The potential problem here is that liberal equality is not an attainable goal for all individuals in society. Some, including children, the elderly, and the severely disabled, will never be able to approach the market in the same way as a free, independent, able-bodied, non dependency worker will. Given that Kittay is a realist about what she calls inevitable dependencies (“when dependency is a feature of our human condition rather than a consequence of socially prescribed roles”), she would agree that liberal equality is not attainable for all, which is part of the reason why she sets out to define equality anew.⁶³ Yet, she still holds onto liberal equality as a method of measuring the justice of certain life-states (such as being a dependency worker). It is not necessarily problematic to utilize a second notion of equality that only applies to certain people. However, Kittay does not really acknowledge her use of this second standard, and she does not offer principled reasons for using this standard to assess the fairness of some people’s lives and not the fairness of other people’s lives. In other words, she does not explain why some people (dependency workers) should expect and demand to be liberally equal, while others (those with extreme inevitable dependencies) cannot or should not expect it.

Another way of putting this same problem is that Kittay seems to argue in general that inevitable dependencies are to be accepted and secondary dependencies are to be limited as much as possible, but she does not offer a principled way to distinguish the two. While both violate the person’s liberal equality, Kittay sees this violation as much more problematic in the case of secondary dependency. On some readings of Kittay’s distinction here, Kittay’s attempt to create an inclusive notion of equality still retains two groups of people: those who should expect to meet the connection-based standard of equality *and* the liberal standard, and others who can only expect the first. However, I think there are other ways of reading this distinction between inevitable and secondary dependencies, some which are more or less faithful to Kittay’s original intent. After we step through a

⁶¹ Ibid, 46.

⁶² Ibid, 47.

⁶³ Ibid, 76.

few possibilities, I will offer a reading of secondary dependency which may diverge from Kittay's original intent but does explain Kittay's emphasis on maintaining the standard of liberal equality for some people.

The first possible (and perhaps easiest) reading is to consider dependence on the whole to be a negative reality, which we should try to limit as much as possible in all cases. On this reading, the difference between inevitable and secondary dependencies is just that secondary dependencies are limitable or eradicable in a way that inevitable dependencies are not. Does Kittay hold this view of dependency? She does say that we should not impose unnecessary dependencies and that we should decrease the dependency of dependents "wherever possible."⁶⁴ Clearly she does not see dependency as an unequivocal positive. However, her perspective on dependency is much more nuanced than viewing dependency as a necessary harm. For one, Kittay understands the relationships which spring from dependency to be highly meaningful to many people's lives: "The ties formed by relations of dependency are among the most important ones we experience."⁶⁵ *Even if* dependency is an evil which should be limited, then, it is an evil which is somehow a source of great meaning and joy in people's lives. Kittay shares her personal struggles with this paradox when considering her shared life with her daughter Sesha, who has severe disabilities: "I have come to appreciate that what we fear in the abstract we might come to cherish when it is embodied in a beloved child."⁶⁶ In any chapter in the book *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, Kittay argues much more explicitly: "We can look again at the fact of human dependency and see it not as an impediment to living well, but as a source of connection, an occasion for developing our capacities for thought, empathy, sensitivity, trust, ingenuity, and creativity; in short, as providing for us the conditions of our distinctive human dignity."⁶⁷ Knowing this, it would be hard to claim that Kittay sees dependency as a negative reality to be eradicated where possible and accepted where not.

Additionally, if Kittay did take this perspective, her stance would not be that far off from the type of liberalism she seeks to critique. She would still hold (market) independence as a goal of some human lives and uphold liberal equality as a standard by which to determine the quality and fairness of human life. She would just differ from liberalism in acknowledgement that these goals are

⁶⁴ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 150; Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 37.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 36.

⁶⁶ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 59.

⁶⁷ Kittay, "A Theory of Justice," 67.

unattainable for many people, even with the help of social or governmental structures. Ameliorating secondary dependency, then, would be a mechanism to help more people achieve the goal of market independence because these people, unlike those with extreme inevitable dependencies, can attain it. The simplest solution, then, a) is unfaithful to Kittay's perspective and b) looks too much like what Kittay is trying to critique.

A second possible distinction between inevitable and secondary dependency is that inevitable dependency is natural (i.e. stems from our shared human condition rather than from current social structures) in a way that secondary dependency is not. On this reading, dependencies are to be accepted and even embraced as sources of relational meaning when they result from natural causes, but socially created dependencies (like the dependency of a dependency worker) should be limited as much as possible. In certain places, it seems like Kittay does argue that secondary dependency is the result of unjust (sexist) social organization: "It falls upon the larger social order to permit the flourishing and preservation of dependency relations by providing for the dependency worker without *creating* the secondary dependency so debilitating to women today."⁶⁸ Elsewhere she says: "The dependency of the unpaid dependency worker is derivative, not inevitable—it is structural, not characterological."⁶⁹ In calling some dependencies "inevitable," Kittay distinguishes these from others, like secondary dependencies, which are in some way socially constructed.

In other places, however, Kittay's argument is less straightforwardly supportive of the view of secondary dependency as socially constructed. She argues that doing dependency work well requires that one puts aside her own desires and aspirations aside in favor of the desires and needs of the cared-for.⁷⁰ Kittay develops the idea of the "transparent self—a self through whom the needs of another is discerned, a self that, when it looks to gauge its own needs, sees first the needs of another."⁷¹ She states that this type of self is *required* for one to do good dependency work, especially when the cared-for is deeply dependent on the dependency worker.⁷² Kittay describes here an other-centering disposition which is required to do dependency work well. This others-centeredness requires that one put the needs of the cared for first while one's own needs, including one's access to

⁶⁸ Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 71; my emphasis.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 129.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 47.

⁷¹ Ibid, 51.

⁷² Ibid, 52.

the public sphere, often take a backseat. If this disposition is necessary for performing good care, then the disadvantages of dependency workers in the public square (i.e. secondary dependencies) are at least partially the natural result of a disposition necessary to care well. In other words, secondary dependency is not *created* by social norms—it is the result of dependency work done well. And yet clearly, as we’ve seen, Kittay also thinks there is something socially constructed occurring here. How do we make sense of this apparent contradiction?

I propose that we need to pull apart two concepts: a) the idea that doing dependency work well leads to secondary dependency and b) the current social reality of who does dependency work and so who has secondary dependency. In my reading, it seems that secondary dependency *itself* is the inevitable and natural result of doing dependency work well. There is no distinction in naturalness, then, between inevitable and secondary dependencies: they are both results of the human condition. Given that secondary dependency seems to be the inevitable result of caring well, we can no more remove it than we can remove someone’s old age or disability. And, importantly, we should not *want* to remove secondary dependency, since doing so would necessarily require us to stop caring well.

From this perspective, what is different between inevitable and secondary dependency is that we can change *who* takes on secondary dependency and how many people bear that burden. This social reality is, at least to some extent, alterable. An infant cannot help but have inevitable dependency—and *someone* needs to meet the needs of the infant. But which people (and how many people) take on the dependency work of caring for that infant—and so which (and how many people) take on a share of secondary dependency is flexible. What is unjust and unacceptable then, is not the existence of secondary dependency but the fact that secondary dependency is currently unjustly distributed, falling more often on the shoulders of some (women) more than others (men).⁷³

⁷³ This distribution is unjust in other ways too, falling more often onto poor women (who often care for other people’s children in addition to their own) than on rich women, for example. While Kittay mostly focuses in *Love’s Labor* on the unequal gender distribution, other care theorists have written about the problem of class and global unequal distributions in caregiving, usually instanced through the case of well off women the global north paying poorer women, who have often immigrated from the global south, to care for their children so they can pursue high earning paid work. For more, see Tronto, Joan C, “The ‘Nanny’ Question in Feminism,” *Hypatia* 17, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 34-51 and Weir, Allison, “The Global Universal Caregiver: Imagining Women’s Liberation in the New Millennium,” *Constellations* 12, no. 3: 308-330.

Given that Kittay does not always strictly separate these concepts in the way we might hope, it is difficult to determine if she would agree with this perspective on her work. Regardless of whether she would agree, however, I think this interpretation solves our problem of valuing market independence for some people and not others. Both what Kittay calls inevitable dependency and secondary dependency are natural and inevitable parts of human life. Secondary dependency is a normal result of doing good care, and as such, it cannot be removed from a dependency worker without compromising good care anymore than we can remove dependency from an infant. This secondary dependency, however, can be *shifted*, *expanded*, and *redistributed* across the social order in more just and less exploitative ways. It is these just shifts of secondary dependencies for which we can strive. We can do this without arguing that secondary dependency is inherently bad or unnatural in a way that inevitable dependencies are not and without claiming that some people (dependency workers) deserve independencies that others (the cared for) do not deserve.

What are some examples of this shifting of secondary dependencies? Kittay argues for an expanded version of welfare which would involve government payment for dependency work. It seems to me that this arrangement does not remove secondary dependency at all but merely shifts who the dependency worker and dependent are dependent on (from one man, for example, to the government). This form of dependency may be more reliable and less open to exploitation than a different form of dependency, but it is still a form of dependency. In a different example, if one daughter has the sole task of caring for her aging father with dementia, she takes on all the secondary dependency required for this care. However, if the care is distributed across several different people, including her brother, her son, and a part time paid employee, the secondary dependency is dispersed across each of these people, potentially making it an easier burden to bear for each individual. Additionally, this arrangement of secondary dependency is more *equitable*, seeing that the woman does not bear the sole burden of caring for her father, a duty which arguably belongs to multiple people in her father's life.

We can also make the burden of secondary dependency lighter on dependency workers by treating it like a need to be met with care—which is exactly why Kittay develops the principle of *doulia*. When we care for those who care for others (like family and friends who rally around a family to provide food, cleaning, and comfort when they have a newborn), we do not remove their secondary dependency through this care anymore than someone who cares for an infant removes her inevitable dependency. Care, including care for those with secondary dependencies, responds to dependency and

ideally makes that dependency less burdensome, but it does not (usually) remove that dependency.⁷⁴ The principle of *doulia* is an acknowledgement that secondary dependency, like inevitable dependency, should be responded to with care.

On this reading, references to liberal equality serve as a litmus test for how much secondary dependency an individual dependency worker has and how fairly distributed secondary dependency is across those with a moral responsibility to care. If we assume (as Kittay seems to) that less secondary dependency generally leads to a freer engagement with the liberal public sphere (including the market) and (as Kittay seems to) that increased ability to engage with the public sphere is an important quality of life marker for many individuals, then we can use *access* to the public sphere (even if individuals do not choose to use that access) as a stand in for the quality of life for individuals who engage in dependency work. Even on this charitable reading of Kittay's use of liberal equality, Kittay still seems to buy into liberalism's insistence that liberal independence, or the ability to engage freely in the competition for social goods, is a key (perhaps even *the* key) to a good life for individuals for whom this type of independence is possible, even after she heavily critiques liberal feminism's focus on market independence over other attributes of a meaningful life.⁷⁵ To the larger skeptics of this claim of liberalism, including MacIntyre and some from within the care theory, Kittay has little to say.

MacIntyre's Moral Independence

MacIntyre's disillusion with liberalism means that he avoids Kittay's problem of upholding market independence for some and not others. However, MacIntyre (following Aristotle's emphasis on the importance of reason for human flourishing) values independence in *moral reasoning*, which seems to leave out some people (namely the severely mentally disabled) from ever achieving human flourishing. He seems to argue that we are *all* vulnerable and dependent on our way to reach flourishing, but some are *too* vulnerable to ever reach it. This view of human flourishing looks

⁷⁴ I say "usually" here because one could argue that part of the effect of good care for a child is that she will become less dependent. This is certainly true in the case of most children, but it is not a generalizable quality of care—there are many forms of care where increased independence is not (and cannot be) a goal of care. From within care ethics (and virtue ethics likely too for that matter), what counts as good care is responsive to the individual person receiving care and her situation.

⁷⁵ Kittay states: "The dependency critique maintains that a pie composed of the dreams and aspirations of men is not sufficiently nourishing. What is left out is just what is omitted when society is supposed to be an association of equals" (Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 14.).

problematic given MacIntyre's understanding of a scale of disability and his desire to rewrite the "us" (able bodied, moral agents) vs. "them" (disabled, old, young, etc., moral patients) dynamic which he believes is common in Western moral philosophy. Additionally, MacIntyre does want to extend some element of flourishing to those who do not have independent practical reasoning: "It is first of all and perhaps least controversially that the exercise of independent reasoning is one essential constituent to full human flourishing. It is not—as I have already insisted—that one cannot flourish at all, if unable to reason. Nonetheless, not to be able to reason soundly at the level of practice is a grave disability."⁷⁶ However, MacIntyre does not lay out an explanation for how people who cannot achieve independent practical reason can flourish.

Kittay has this exact critique of Western philosophy in general in *Learning from My Daughter*. She writes that having a close relationship with someone who does not have clear rational capacity makes her question the centrality of reason to a good life.⁷⁷ In its place, she emphasizes the importance of joy, which she implicitly argues is more accessible to human beings, regardless of intellectual ability: "Even an examined life, if it holds no joy, may not be a life worth living. With joy, life has a point, a reason to be."⁷⁸ Does MacIntyre's view fall under the group critiqued here? Does MacIntyre have a possible defense from this critique of Kittay's?

Firstly, let us clarify MacIntyre's position to see if he is in fact a target of Kittay's critique. He is careful to distance himself from moral theories which see reason as an attribute that entities either have or do not have.⁷⁹ Rather, he argues that independent practical reasoning needs to be cultivated and harnessed in order to manifest in every individual. As such, there are many people who are on their way to independent practical reasoning but not fully there yet (for example, children), people who used to have independent practical reasoning but have lost aspects of it (for example, some elderly, many of the dying), and people who may never reach full independent practical reasoning (the permanently intellectually disabled, people who received very poor moral educations,

⁷⁶ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 105.

⁷⁷ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 8.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 53.

⁷⁹ For example, he says: "In most moral philosophy the starting point is one that already presupposes the existence of mature independent practical reasoners whose social relationships are the relationships of the adult world....But practical 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 some very large degree they are unable to discard and disown" (MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 81-82).

etc.). This reality is the source of our vulnerability: there are many contingencies (most of which are out of the control of the individual) which hinder many people from becoming independent practical reasoners. We are *all* vulnerable to fail to develop independent practical reasoning and so fail to flourish fully. One of the causes of frustration of this underlying ability is severe intellectual disability (whether this disability is developed, as in the case of severe dementia or brain injury, for example or genetic).⁸⁰

MacIntyre does have a good amount to say about people who are least capable of achieving independent practical reason. Specifically, he is concerned with including these people within the moral community in various ways. Firstly, MacIntyre places a strong emphasis on the need for representation by proxy for those who do not have independent practical reasoning. The role of the proxy is to act as a “second self” for the disabled person, which seems quite similar to Kittay’s notion of the “transparent self.” “The proxy’s role is to speak for those thus disabled both inside and outside the community in just the way that that particular disabled individual would have done so for her or himself, had she or he still been able to speak.”⁸¹ MacIntyre clarifies that this proxy relationship is distinctive from that of a parent-child relationship, even if the degree of dependence is the same, because parents are at least partially responsible for defining or deciding the good of their child, while proxies are only supposed to *identify and communicate* the good of the person, so that, “as far as possible, each individual contributes to the shared deliberation of the community in her or his own voice.”⁸² Here, MacIntyre focuses directly on those who *become* disabled but who were, at one point or another, independent practical reasoners. This is because the best proxies are those who had an intimate friendship with an individual before disability: “Such an individual will generally need to know how I have judged my good in various situations in the past and what the reasoning was by which I supported my judgements. For, only if they know this, will they be able to speak for *me*, as I would have done for myself.”⁸³ MacIntyre does admit that this proxy relationship becomes much more complicated when the proxy does not have knowledge of the person pre-disability, and, as we can assume, when individuals who are severely disabled their whole lives. Kittay might argue here, however, that those who know a severely disabled person intimately can understand communications

⁸⁰ Ibid, 72.

⁸¹ Ibid, 139.

⁸² Ibid, 139-140.

⁸³ Ibid, 139.

they make about their view of their own good and so might be able to advocate for their good as they understand it.⁸⁴ MacIntyre's focus here on those who have been independent practical reasoners over those who have not and will never be is typical of most of the book—he has much to say about those who will be (or can be) independent practical reasoners and those who have been, but he says frustratingly little about the hardest category: those who are not and will likely never be independent practical reasoners.

Secondly, MacIntyre argues that those with severe disabilities can be active participants in the moral community by being teachers to others. We do learn more about our good and our moral development through theoretical discussion with others, but, as we have seen, MacIntyre also argues that we learn about our good through daily communal action. By existing in relationship with the profoundly disabled—by taking on the daily actions of their care—we gain them as our teachers:

“It will be urged that of such [those with profound disabilities] we can only say that at most they can be passive objects of benevolence designed to limit their suffering, beings whose existence can only be a cost, but not in any way a benefit to others. How could *they* be our teachers? This is a powerful and widely influential view. Its presupposition is that caring for and giving to others who can make no voluntary return to me can only be costs and burdens...My relationships with them must be one-sided. But this is a mistake. What they give us is the possibility of learning something essential, what it is for someone else to be wholly entrusted to our care, so that we are answerable for their well-being.”⁸⁵

Here, MacIntyre puts forth an example of what profoundly disabled people can teach us: what it is like to be fully entrusted with someone else's well-being. However, this example seems to be rather weak, especially in comparison to Kittay's rich personal examples of what she has learned from caring for her daughter. Clearly there is more to say here, and MacIntyre could have provided better examples to nail this point home, especially given that the profoundly disabled's roles as teachers seems to be their primary method of influencing the moral community for MacIntyre.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, MacIntyre argues that those who are “least capable of independent practical reasoning, the very young and the very old, the sick, the injured, and the otherwise disabled” benefit from “communal flourishing” and, interesting, that “their individual flourishing will be an important index of the flourishing of the whole community.”⁸⁶ The flourishing

⁸⁴ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 200-205.

⁸⁵ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 138-139.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 108-109.

of a community is determined by how well it is caring for those who cannot reach independent practical reasoning, which corresponds with those who have the greatest vulnerability. For MacIntyre, these things correspond because a flourishing community is one where “it is *need* that provides reasons for action” (rather than, I assume, reaches for power, desire for increased freedom or influence, etc.).⁸⁷ We can also see here that MacIntyre is assuming some level of flourishing for those who are least likely to be independent practical reasoners. But of what does this flourishing consist? Clearly it has something to do with having one’s needs met, but it is difficult to determine what exactly MacIntyre thinks the relationship between receiving care when we need it and flourishing is. For those with independent practical reasoning, this connection seems fairly straightforward: receiving care for our needs is a prerequisite to achieving flourishing because if our needs are not met, we will never become independent practical reasoners. However, it seems here that flourishing can still be achieved as a result of having our needs met even if meeting these needs never allows us to reach independent practical reasoning. Given that MacIntyre is intent on the inclusion of the disabled within moral communities, his account would greatly benefit from an explanation of how flourishing of human beings can occur when they cannot possess moral or intellectual independence.

Regardless of all these clarifications, MacIntyre cannot really answer the root of Kittay’s critique of holding reasoning at the center of a flourishing life. MacIntyre is committed to the position that some individuals (usually through limited fault of their own) will not be able to or will not reach (the pique of) human flourishing, while others can. As he states, independent practical reasoning is not a given of human life; it is an “achievement,” and as such, all people are more or less vulnerable to not achieving it. And if some type of flourishing is possible without becoming an independent practical reasoner, MacIntyre does not clarify how this is possible, given human flourishing is defined according to human being’s nature as a rational animal.

Although Kittay directly disagrees with valuing the kind of intellectual independence that MacIntyre understands to be necessary for a flourishing life, she still, in her own way, holds up a type of independence as the key to a flourishing life (for those capable of reaching it): liberal independence. Examining the work of these two philosophers together makes it clearer to us that MacIntyre and Kittay both continue to value forms of independence which are valued by the moral systems (virtue ethics and liberal theory) into which they incorporate care concerns. They still hold

⁸⁷ Ibid, 109; emphasis original.

these forms of independence as features of a/the good life for at least some people (those capable of achieving them) and are interestingly silent about these standards of independence in relation to those who cannot achieve them. Importantly, the people who cannot achieve these independences are the highly dependent people who are not considered in most moral theories and whom Kittay and MacIntyre seek to incorporate into their moral theories.

I am not claiming that Kittay's and MacIntyre's stances on certain kinds of independence negate the important work they do on dependency—far from it. Furthermore, I am not even claiming necessarily that these theorists are wrong to value these types of independence; recognizing dependency and even celebrating its meaningful effects on human life does not necessitate a condemnation of independence. Rather, by pointing out the independences still valued by Kittay and MacIntyre, I argue that both these theories could use a more explicit justification for the valuing of these independences and an explanation of the relationship between these independences and those who cannot achieve them. Additionally, the relationship between acknowledging and incorporating dependency and continuing to use independence as a measure of a good life is a great example of the difficulties which arise when attempting to incorporate care concerns into a moral system which has traditionally ignored dependency and its effects in human life. These difficulties will continue to be a theme in the coming chapters.

Chapter 2: Differing Responses to Dependency

In Ch.1, we discussed how the realities of vulnerability and dependency can be conceptualized differently when contextualized in the frameworks of virtue ethics and care-concern liberalism. This chapter explores how these two moral frameworks can lead to different ways of practically accounting for vulnerability and dependency in social and political life. As we will see, MacIntyre's and Kittay's differing conceptions of human good and differing understandings of the role of institutions in the fostering of human good leads to opposing proposed solutions. This chapter will examine the advice of both philosophers for communal and political life and the moral reasoning behind these recommendations. We will also put these two philosophers into conversation about their proposed solutions, looking for places of agreement and also of disagreement—and examining what these practical differences say about core conceptual differences between MacIntyre and Kittay.

MacIntyre: Robust Community

As we saw in Ch.1, MacIntyre argues that acknowledging and responding to human dependency, both in the sphere of general needs of living and for living well—becoming and being an independent practical reasoner—are necessary for human flourishing. He proposes that both types of dependencies are best cared for within robust mid-sized communities. These communities would have a generally shared concept of the ends of human life and would be in frequent dialogue about the best means to achieve those ends.⁸⁸ He specifies that all communities of this type have two sets of “rules” or “norms:” those of “giving and receiving” and those of “power.”⁸⁹ Rules of “giving and receiving” are those which are required for us to achieve flourishing, like caring for those who are dependent.⁹⁰ The rules of power seem to be endemic to human society and institutions, and MacIntyre argues that when they are used “as instruments of domination and power,” they can work against our flourishing.⁹¹ MacIntyre argues that, in a good community, the rules of power will be subjugated to the rules of giving and receiving, so that the “distribution of power” is used for the sake of human flourishing.⁹² For example, MacIntyre argues that market relationships only work properly towards

⁸⁸ Ibid, 107.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 102-103. MacIntyre specifies that he is influenced in this formulation (and in his critiques of liberalism) by Karl Marx (Ibid, 102, 130).

⁹⁰ The specifics of MacIntyre's concepts of care will be discussed in Ch.3.

⁹¹ Ibid, 102-103.

⁹² Ibid, 103.

our flourishing when they are embedded within deeper relationships of giving and receiving.⁹³ This distinction between these two sets of rules and their proper roles in human society will be very important for MacIntyre's understanding of modern liberal nation states.

It is difficult to find these types of MacIntyrean communities in 21st century North America, and MacIntyre thinks for good reason—he argues that the liberal view of the human person makes it difficult for these communities to form and flourish. The closest we have in my mind are likely activist groups, church communities and religious orders, close extended family networks, and rural farming communities.⁹⁴ MacIntyre is envisioning something much more central to our lives than most special-interest communities today and much more impactful on our lives than most contemporary churches. It is within these communities that people would live, work, and care for each other—all for the purpose of discovering the ends of human life and for helping each individual to achieve those ends in community with others. Perhaps we can see an example of this type of community in Wendell Berry's novel *Hannah Coulter*, which describes life in a rural farming town in the United States during the latter half of the 20th century. In this community, the boundary between family member and neighbor frequently melts away as community members regularly come together to help each other with farm work, household labor, and hold each other's grief in losing husbands and sons to war. In one example of such care, Hannah effectively becomes an adopted daughter to her husband's parents when he dies at war shortly after their marriage, even though she eventually marries another man. The parents of her first husband care for her and her children by that second husband as if they were blood related. Hannah has the opportunity to pay back this care at the end of the novel when her grandson, who has been missing for years, shows up at her door, asking for a place to live and work. Throughout the novel, we see instances of care freely given in response to need, people stepping up where they can, and a sense of commitment in a community which goes beyond happenstance of location.

MacIntyre argues that these communities are vital for supporting the dependencies of others by setting up expectations for care when we are dependent, as we all will likely be many times throughout our lives.⁹⁵ He describes this mindset as one where the interests of the disabled are not

⁹³ Ibid, 117.

⁹⁴ MacIntyre offers as examples “fishing communities in New England over the past hundred and fifty years,” “Welsh mining communities,” and “farming cooperatives in Donegal” (Ibid, 143).

⁹⁵ Ibid, 108.

considered special group interests but rather the interests of all—because we all will require more or less support throughout our lives in order to flourish.⁹⁶ Additionally, these communities also play a direct role in independent practical reasoning because, as we have seen, it can only be properly practiced within a community. Independent practical reasoners exist in conversation with each other both about the ends of human life and the means by which to get there. MacIntyre argues that any healthy community (and any healthy intellectual tradition for that matter) involves continued intellectual argument between its members about what the purposes and goals of that community are. For example, he says that “[A university’s] common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be...”⁹⁷ In order for a university to be healthy, in other words, its members need to be in conversation about what makes a university good and evaluating whether its current norms are approaching that good. In order for a community to be healthy, it needs to be doing the same.

This communal discovery of the common good does not just happen through intellectual conversation but also through other acts of living together: “We learn what our common good is, and indeed what our own individual goods are, not primarily and never only by theoretical reflection, but in everyday shared activities and the evaluations of alternatives that those activities impose.”⁹⁸ Action is a part of and goes hand in hand with collective deliberation of the good. This view follows MacIntyre’s general evaluation of the importance of action in the moral life—we flourish through *practical* reason. We do not deliberate for the sake of deliberation, but for the sake of virtuous action.⁹⁹ As we have seen, when communities are healthy, this action will respond to need.¹⁰⁰

Importantly, this intellectual deliberation about ends and means, whether it takes place through discourse or through communal action, is *productive* for MacIntyre in a way that he argues that the negotiations at the heart of liberalism are not. MacIntyre thinks of liberalism as being fundamentally agnostic and individualistic about the ends of human life. Each individual is tasked with defining or finding flourishing for herself, and so liberal societies must regard the question of

⁹⁶ Ibid, 130.

⁹⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (1981; repr., Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 222.

⁹⁸ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 136.

⁹⁹ MacIntyre argues that “the conclusion of sound and effective practical reasoning is an action, that action which is best for this particular agent to do in these particular circumstances” (Ibid, 92).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 109.

human ends “from the public standpoint as systematically unsettleable.”¹⁰¹ MacIntyre, on the other hand argues that we cannot come to an understanding of our own end as human beings *except* through communal discourse and action. Hence MacIntyre’s emphasis on the importance of shared ends (or the possibility of discovering shared ends) in a community. Healthy communities need to have a sense that a consensus is possible to reach, and that the goal of argument is not for each to air her particular view but to reach consensus.¹⁰² Additionally (and just as importantly), we cannot possibly agree about proper means if we do not have some level of agreement about ends: “Those who are to debate with each other rationally and fruitfully about means must already be in agreement about the relevant ends. It is not that there cannot be disagreement about ends, but... there must be at some further and more fundamental level at least partial agreement about...ends.”¹⁰³ And we certainly want debate about means to be fruitful because without it, a community can hardly act together for the good of its members.

This communal work of caring for each other (especially dependents) and for debating about the means and ends of human life can only properly take place in these types of mid-sized communities. MacIntyre explicitly argues that the work cannot be done alone by either the family unit or large scale liberal government. The latter argument is perhaps the strongest point of contention between MacIntyre’s and Kittay’s solutions—and it points to fundamental disagreements in their attitudes towards contemporary liberal governments and about the role of institutions in human life. But first, MacIntyre argues that although families are often important sites of the exercise of the virtues of acknowledged dependence (and familial relationships can serve as “paradigm” examples of relationships sustained by these virtues), the flourishing of a family is dependent on the flourishing of the local community: “Generally and characteristically...the goods of family life are achieved in and with the goods of various types of local community.”¹⁰⁴ Excepting extreme cases, families thrive when local communities thrive, and families cannot independently create sites of acknowledged dependence without support from the local community.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 119.

¹⁰² MacIntyre argues quite radically in *After Virtue* that the political consensus reached in liberal democracy is not a true consensus at all, given fundamental moral disagreements between groups and individuals. Rather, liberal democracy is not a “matter of general consensus, but ‘is a civil war carried on by other means’ between various groups which fundamentally disagree with each other about the ends of human life (Ibid, 253).

¹⁰³ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 107.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 134-135.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 134.

Kittay might want to add here that family dependence on the external community is especially important and evident when the needs of dependents in the family reach beyond the abilities of other members of the family, like in the case of extreme or permanent dependency. She discusses the idea of “distributive mothering,” wherein some of the care needed for her disabled daughter, Sesha, was given by community members outside her immediate family.¹⁰⁶ For Kittay, this distribution of dependency work can partially relieve burdens on family members and prevent the build up of resentment towards the dependent.¹⁰⁷ Although MacIntyre does not cite this special case explicitly, I think he would also want to maintain this case as a perfect example of why families cannot thrive independent of their local communities. In MacIntyre’s view, caring for the needs of others is the responsibility of the whole community, not just of those who have direct familial relationships. Expecting parents to take on the care of a severely disabled child without communal support, then, fundamentally misunderstands who has responsibility for and stakes in the child’s wellbeing.

According to MacIntyre, this work of ensuring that dependents are cared for and communal discourse occurs can also not be done properly by the government of a liberal state. This opinion follows from MacIntyre’s larger understanding of the modern state and economic order being one primarily of “individualism... acquisitiveness, and... elevation of the values of the market to a central social place.”¹⁰⁸ He understands these values of the modern state to be fundamentally at odds with those of a virtue ethics tradition.¹⁰⁹ As we’ve seen, MacIntyre argues that ideally, the rules of power are subordinated to the rules of giving and receiving. The liberal state, however, is informed by the rules of power, and there is little room for the rules of giving and receiving, which are central to the care of each other.¹¹⁰ In MacIntyre’s ideal society, the actions of institutions would a) be the result of communal deliberations about the good of human beings and b) would primarily act in response to need. However, he argues that, given the liberal state’s agnosticism about the good of human beings, “The distribution of goods by government in no way reflects a common mind arrived at through

¹⁰⁶ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 158. Another example of this concept is “othermothers,” who Patricia Hill Collins describes as “women who assist bloodmothers by sharing mothering responsibilities.” She argues that these othermothers have “traditionally been central to the institution of Black motherhood” (Collins, Patricia Hill, “Black Women and Motherhood,” In *Black Feminist Thought*, (New York: Routledge, 2000), 178.).

¹⁰⁷ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 158, 160.

¹⁰⁸ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 255

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 255.

¹¹⁰ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 133.

widespread shared deliberation governed by norms of rational enquiry.”¹¹¹ Rather than responding to the needs of people in communities, modern states “are governed through a series of compromises between a range of more or less conflicting economic and social interests,” where money is what at least partially determines whose interests are taken into account.¹¹² In other words, the rules of power crowd out the rules of giving and receiving.

MacIntyre is not alone in this pessimistic outlook on the abilities of current liberal governments and recommending a subsequent turn to community. Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, a disability activist and care theorist, writing nineteen years after the publication of *Dependent Rational Animals*, echoes MacIntyre’s concern with the ability of large governments to meet dependency needs. Given current governments’ failures to provide disabled people with adequate support, Piepzna-Samarasinha argues, disabled people should (and do already) come together “to create networks of care for and by us.”¹¹³ Piepzna-Samarasinha argues that governments provide disability support “begrudgingly” and that in many cases state or family care becomes a source of “abuse and lack of control” for those receiving care.¹¹⁴ In contrast, local communities, while certainly not a perfect solution, can be a form of “even deeply joyful” support by and for disabled people “that doesn’t burn anyone out or abuse or underpay anyone in the process.”¹¹⁵ MacIntyre and Piepzna-Samarasinha likely have different understandings of what an ideal government should look like (and how likely we are to achieve that ideal government), but it is interesting that they both point out ways in which governments and families are inadequately equipped to respond to dependency alone. They agree that mid-sized communities (which Piepzna-Samarasinha calls “care webs”), rooted in an acknowledgement of dependency and action based on need, can provide personalized and reliable care in a way that large liberal governments are not or cannot.

MacIntyre is also concerned about the current size of modern nation states, specifically because he argues that it prevents them from truly receiving input from and being attuned to the needs of most people.¹¹⁶ As we’ve seen, MacIntyre is concerned with each individual’s ability to have a part

¹¹¹ Ibid, 131.

¹¹² Ibid, 131.

¹¹³ Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, “Care Webs: Experiments in Creating Collective Access,” in *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018), 33.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 36, 33.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 33, 35.

¹¹⁶ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 131.

in the “shared deliberation” of healthy public and political discourse (including those without independent practical reasoning, who are represented by proxy).¹¹⁷ MacIntyre considers modern states to be more like “giant utility companies” than sensitive responders to the needs of the people.¹¹⁸ This description of governments reminds me of Piepzna-Samarasihna’s description of governments providing care services “begrudgingly:” both seem to argue that liberal governments are not in the business of caring well. MacIntyre does say that the state certainly has a role in providing public goods, and has done so in the past (citing the Americans with Disabilities Act as an example), but these public goods are not the stronger, thicker “common good” towards which a healthy community strives, and states which claim to be in the business of administering a common good are “purveyor[s] of dangerous fictions.”¹¹⁹ Overall, we can see that MacIntyre is highly skeptical of the ability of large nation states to know the needs of its people, to act in accordance with the rules of giving and receiving, and to do these things with a greater dexterity and sensitivity than a local community can.

Interestingly, MacIntyre is not against using political mechanisms (including state funds) to ensure that needs are met, he just has a different understanding of what political action would look like. Specifically, he is concerned with the situation in modern states where “a small minority of the population” make “politics their active occupation” and then “a huge largely passive majority” are “mobilized only at periodic intervals, for elections or for national crises.”¹²⁰ He argues specifically that this system necessitates that the public receives “only a highly simplified and impoverished account of the issues that are presented to it.”¹²¹ MacIntyre argues instead that for the needs of people to be met, local communities, through shared deliberation, need to have much greater control of how resources (including state resources), power, and responsibilities are distributed, both through the local government and less governmental means.¹²² He is purposefully (if a bit frustratingly) vague about what these structures would look like, arguing that “the forms taken by those structures will vary with the culture and the history of the community.”¹²³ It seems like MacIntyre’s largest concern with liberal governments is not that they are governments per se but that they are a liberal (and so, as

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 133.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 132.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 132-133.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 141.

¹²¹ Ibid, 142.

¹²² Ibid, 142-143.

¹²³ Ibid, 144.

he sees it, hostile to communal discovery of human good and dictated by the rules of power) and b) too big to truly understand and answer to the needs of the particular individuals in particular communities.

This strong skepticism of large-scale liberal government's ability to provide an adequate response to dependency differentiates MacIntyre from Kittay, who argues that governmental programs, specifically welfare, can be utilized to address the injustices that surround dependency. As we will see, Kittay uses her principle of *doulia* (caring for the dependency worker) to advocate for paid dependency work through the government. MacIntyre would take issue with this solution for several reasons, which we will talk about in more detail later. We can already see MacIntyre's key objection, however: in MacIntyre's thought, *doulia* would be part of the rules of giving and receiving. Because current governmental structures are dominated by the rules of power, introducing *doulia* into this system built on power, money, and competing interests is the equivalent of attempting to shove a square peg into a round hole: it either will not fit, or, when it finally does, it will be too misshapen to serve its original purpose.

Although it would be easy to think of MacIntyre as the more traditional of the two philosophers because of his adherence to an established ethical system and his taking inspiration from pre-modern communities, we see here a case where the roles are not so clearly defined. Both MacIntyre and Kittay speak to liberalism in their work, but Kittay is interested in using care ethics to reform liberal society from the inside. She is relatively optimistic about the current systems' abilities to adopt new principles and reshape itself to acknowledge dependency. MacIntyre, on the other hand, is much more scathing in his review of liberalism and of modern nation states in general and so sees little from liberalism to rescue. In this sense at least, his solutions have the freedom to be much more radical than Kittay's, but, as Kittay would likely point out, they also therefore have the potential to lose out on the aspects of liberalism worth saving.

Kittay: A Caring Rawlsian Liberalism, *Doulia*, and Paid Dependency Work

Because Kittay argues that liberalism's exclusion of dependency exploits dependency workers and neglects the concerns of dependents, one of Kittay's goals is to introduce the realities of dependency and, therefore, the moral commitment to care into a liberal framework.¹²⁴ Her first step in

¹²⁴ Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 77.

this process is to make the claim common in care theory that, given the reality of human dependency, the desire and need to care and be cared for is part of *any* conception of the good.¹²⁵ Furthermore, because caring for dependents is necessary for the continuation of human society beyond the current generation, it cannot be thought of as “one choice of the good life among others” as many other goods are often thought of within the liberal framework.¹²⁶ She argues then, that “regardless of how we fashion our conception of the good, we would want to be cared for when we are dependent and would want to be adequately supported if we find ourselves having to be responsible for the care of a dependent.”¹²⁷ This claim sounds strikingly similar to MacIntyre’s argument that knowing that we will be cared for when we are dependent is a necessary precondition to flourishing: “If I am to flourish to the full extent that it possible for a human being, then my whole life has to be of a certain kind, one in which I... receive and have reasonable expectation of receiving the attentive care needed when I am very young, old and ill, or injured.”¹²⁸ In both cases, we see asserted the importance of the assurance of care for a good life.

However, this agreement also reveals a source of contention between MacIntyre and Kittay. For MacIntyre, making a positive claim about in what human good resides is not controversial; he believes that human communities and intellectual traditions can and should reach positive conceptions of the ends of human life and the common good of the community. Care theorists also usually seem comfortable making these sorts of positive claims about care specifically, which is where Kittay draws this inspiration. However, at least from MacIntyre’s point of view, liberalism is not in the business of advocating for positive conceptions of human good; it purposefully leaves this question open for each individual to determine for herself. Many liberal systems have concepts of basic goods (which is where, as we will see, Kittay slots care into), but basic goods are usually considered the building blocks necessary for individuals to determine and live out their own good, as they so define it. Kittay, on the other hand, seems to be attempting to add to the liberal tradition a positive (partial) conception of the good—a form of basic agreement about the importance of care concerns across every individual conception of the good. Unlike other goods, which can be included or excluded from conceptions of one’s personal good as one sees fit, care is “not one choice...among

¹²⁵ Ibid, 83.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 92.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 102.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 108.

others” but is somehow outside this landscape of choice. Kittay describes this understanding in a later essay as: “a shared conception of a central good: that people care about each other.”¹²⁹ For MacIntyre, this attempt to advocate for a positive conception of the good which is shared among all people is correct, it is just fundamentally *aliberal*.

Kittay still wants to maintain the ability for individuals to define their own good. We can see this commitment in her description of flourishing (or of living a good life) from *Learning from My Daughter*, which sounds quite liberal. She states that a flourishing individual “has the things that an individual truly cares about” and “the things that the individual truly cares about are that genuine needs are met...And legitimate wants are satisfied.”¹³⁰ Here she is interestingly caveating the liberal conception by specifying that an individual should care about “*genuine needs*” and “*legitimate wants*,” but otherwise, she still leaves this open enough for a large variety of possible conceptions. Later, she says that flourishing is “sensing that we are living the life we want to live, having a sense of well-being—as we ourselves conceive of well-being.”¹³¹ Kittay (both in *Love’s Labor* and *Learning from My Daughter*) is clearly not trying to adopt a purely positive account of human flourishing. Rather, she seems to be arguing that within the diversity of possible individual conceptions of the good life, each one will include care concerns: it will value care and being cared for as part of that conception. She sometimes seems to be saying that although we should and do have the ability to determine our own conception of the good, there are certain things which we always value—certain aspects of flourishing, like being cared for when we need it, which are necessarily part of our conception of the good. I will call Kittay’s conception of the good life a *partially positive* conception of flourishing.

Once Kittay establishes this partially positive conception of flourishing in *Love’s Labor*, she attempts to integrate it into a liberal moral theory, specially choosing Rawls’ moral theory as a test case. She argues that care’s important place in all lives should grant care a place among Rawls’ primary goods: “The good *both to be cared for in a responsive dependency relation if and when one is unable to care for oneself, and to meet the dependency needs of others without incurring undue sacrifices oneself* is a primary good in the Rawlsian sense because it is a good of citizens as citizens

¹²⁹ Kittay, “A Theory of Justice,” 62.

¹³⁰ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 178.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 198,

pursue their own conception of the good and exercise their moral faculties of justice and care.”¹³² She also adds “the principle of the social responsibility of care” as a third principle of justice, which, “in contrast to the others, would not be based on our equal vulnerability, nor on our possession of rationality, a sense of justice, and a vision of our own good. Instead, it would be based on our unequal vulnerability in dependency, on our moral power to respond to others in need, and on the primacy of human relations to happiness and well-being.”¹³³ Kittay acknowledges that this addition to Rawls’ framework is not a seamless one. But given that a failure to acknowledge dependency harms dependency workers, usually women, more than others, she argues that these additions are necessary in order to “sustain the egalitarian vision that purports to inform [the framework].”¹³⁴ In other words, the inclusion of concerns about dependency and care save Rawls’ framework (and, by extension, liberal moral theory in general) from failing to make good on its own egalitarian promises (especially for women).

Again, we can see here a fundamental disagreement between Kittay and MacIntyre. From MacIntyre’s perspective, the task that Kittay is attempting to undertake is doomed from the start. From his perspective, Kittay is attempting to introduce into liberalism two things which are fundamentally antithetical to it: 1) a (partially) positive conception of human flourishing and 2) care, which is an aspect of the rules of giving and receiving. As we will see, he would also likely be very skeptical of Kittay’s proposed practical solution to the reality of secondary dependency.

Kittay argues that the principle of *doulia*, the obligation to care for those who care for others, extends beyond interpersonal relationships to communities and to governments.¹³⁵ She specifically uses the principle of *doulia* to advocate for the extension of welfare to all dependency workers so that their work may be paid for by the government: “What I will be suggesting here is that the concept of *doulia* can serve as a justification for welfare extended to the solo mother, but that it is a justification which calls for a much broader implementation. Not only must welfare be extended to impoverished solo mothers, but it should be extended to all dependency workers.”¹³⁶ To support this idea, Kittay returns to her argument about secondary dependency. She states that, in our current economic system,

¹³² Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 103; emphasis original.

¹³³ Ibid, 113.

¹³⁴ Ibid, 113.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 107, 114.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 128.

it is very difficult to provide for one's own needs while caring for a dependent, and this, of course, is in large part what secondary dependency is: "Having dependents to care for means that without additional support, you cannot—given the structure of our contemporary industrial life and its economy—simultaneously provide the *means* to take care of them and do the caring for them."¹³⁷ As a result, a dependency worker needs a "provider:" someone else who provides the means to care for herself and her dependents.¹³⁸ In the traditional family model, this provider is the male spouse or partner of the dependency worker. Given the vulnerability inherent in depending on one person to be a provider, Kittay advocates for this provider role to be taken by the state in the form of wages for dependency work.¹³⁹ As I argued in Ch.1, it seems like this change shifts *who* the dependency worker is dependent on, but it does not remove the secondary dependency itself. The dependency worker is now dependent on the state, which, for Kittay, is a more trustworthy source of support than an individual man (if such a supportive man or other person even exists, which is far from guaranteed).

Before we discuss the large-scale disagreements between Kittay and MacIntyre here, it is important to acknowledge a place of agreement between them. Both Kittay and MacIntyre argue that many caregivers are non-fungible; *who* does the caring is often deeply important to the quality of care for dependents. As Kittay puts it: "*who* does the caring is frequently as important as the care itself."¹⁴⁰ Both philosophers consider familial relationships (especially those between a child and a mother) to be paradigm care relationships.¹⁴¹ They acknowledge the relationships between dependency workers and dependents are often sources of deep meaning for individuals, and many dependents (although not all) prefer to be cared for by someone with whom they have a deep personal relationship. Kittay noticeably does not advocate strongly for state-provided care (although it would definitely be too far to say that she would disagree with its existence entirely). She advocates for state intervention on the level of the *provider*, not on the level of dependency worker. She does not want the state to *do* the care of dependency work, but rather support dependency workers in order to make their work easier and more equitable. This emphasis indicates a desire to maintain healthy dependency worker-dependent relationships where possible.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 129.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 144.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 130, 144.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 111.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 69; MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 134-135.

Given MacIntyre's skepticism about the ability of large liberal governments to be swayed by the rules of giving and receiving (which *doulia* certainly would be) he clearly would be skeptical of Kittay's solution. Firstly, we know that MacIntyre would likely be skeptical about reliance on a liberal government for solutions to dependency, especially a federal government of a large nation. How do we know a government will be more reliable and sensitive than a local community?¹⁴² MacIntyre thinks that proper care comes from responsiveness to known needs, which is less and less possible the further an entity gets from the dependent individuals. Secondly, MacIntyre argues that if the rules of giving and receiving inform people at any level of organization, it is at the level of the local community (including local government). He would likely argue that investing in thick networks of giving and receiving, as well as developing a knowledge and acknowledgement of the reality of dependency within individuals in a local community is a more effective strategy for ensuring that an individual's needs are met than turning to a large-scale liberal government.

Although MacIntyre might be able to critique Kittay for being naive about the motivations and abilities of liberal governments, Kittay would likely accuse MacIntyre of being naive about the

¹⁴² Nel Noddings, one of the first and most prominent care theorists, might voice this same hesitancy but in another way. She argues that although organizations can "certainly address some particular needs," "they cannot *care* in the sense required by care ethics" (Noddings, Nel, "Care Ethics and 'Caring' Organizations." In *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, edited by Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington (Oxford University Press, 2015), 72.). For Noddings, care itself needs "the person-to-person relationship characterized by attention, dialogue, recognition of expressed needs, and immediate response moved by the feeling aroused when people are in direct contact with those in need" (Noddings, "'Caring' Organizations," 76). Organizations, therefore, cannot "care-for;" they can only "care-about:" "[organizations] must concentrate on establishing conditions under which caring-for can take place" (Noddings, "'Caring' Organizations," 75). This difference is important for Noddings because we must not try to provide care for someone without a personal relationship, wherein we can listen to expressed needs, not invent assumed ones (Noddings, "'Caring' Organizations," 77). The role of organizations, then, is to create the conditions necessary for individuals to form the personal relationship necessary to understand the need and have access to the resources necessary to meet that need. Thus, Noddings might agree with MacIntyre's point here that organizations (like the government) do not have the ability to provide care in the way that the members of a community can. Noddings might not necessarily have a problem with Kittay's proposal to provide governmental funds to dependency workers, but she might question Kittay's description of governmental pay as a form of *doulia*, given that *doulia* is explicitly *care* for dependency workers. Perhaps Noddings would reframe Kittay's suggestion for governmental paid dependency work as a type of "caring-about" the dependent; paying a dependency worker may help to create conditions within which the dependency worker can care better for the dependency. However, this formulation shifts the purpose of governmental pay from the good of the dependency worker to the good of the dependent—which is not in the spirit of Kittay's *doulia*. At the very least, perhaps Noddings and MacIntyre would agree that the principle of *doulia* is better suited to motivate personal and communal care for dependency workers, not governmental support, which cannot be strictly described as "care." However, there are other possible perspectives here. For a look at how care might be incorporated into democratic frameworks, see Joan C Tronto, *Caring Democracy: Markets, Equality, and Justice* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

realities of communities. She would likely point to corruptions like sexism, which can make local communities inadequately sensitive to the needs of dependents and deeply unjust in their distributions of dependency labor. MacIntyre would respond here by stating that these corruptions are certainly possible, and that is why the virtues need to be cultivated in the individuals who make up the community.¹⁴³ Additionally, because Kittay considers wages dependency work to be a partial solution (along with just redistribution of gendered dependency) to inequality in family structures, she might argue that dependency on the government is a worthwhile price to pay for increased familial and gender equality.

Furthermore, Kittay is interested in wages for dependency work being a way to make dependency work more similar to other forms of labor. She says: “like other workers, they need vacations, exit options, retraining when they are no longer needed at their employment.”¹⁴⁴ This move is a bit of a strange one, considering that Kittay wants dependency relationships to become the paradigm for all relationships and wants to build a relational account of human value.¹⁴⁵ I would like to point out (likely with MacIntyre) that dependency work is fundamentally about the rules of giving and receiving, which are different from the rules of the marketplace. Kittay herself, throughout *Love’s Labor*, strongly agrees with this claim. As we’ve seen, a transparent self is *required* of a good caregiver.¹⁴⁶ Although Kittay emphasizes the importance of preventing abuse or exploitation of the dependency worker, she does so through her connection-based equality in a much more nuanced way than the quote above suggests. As she and MacIntyre both make clear, caring for dependents cannot operate on the metric of market relationships, because people are not fully independent. An elderly parent, for example, will suffer greatly if her children take advantage of “exit options” much more than a company will suffer if an employee does the same.

Although Kittay does mention the role of community in providing support for dependency workers, her emphasis on government support drowns out the mentions she makes of it in *Love’s Labor*. Although *Learning from My Daughter* does speak more to the interpersonal relationships of care work, it does not focus very much at all on what local community support could provide for dependency workers. In both books, she does speak about the necessity, blessings, and difficulties

¹⁴³ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 142.

¹⁴⁴ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 143.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 143.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 52-53.

about having other people care for her daughter Sesha, but she generally speaks much more hesitantly about these realities than she does about welfare support, perhaps partially because interpersonal matters are much more difficult to speak about universally.¹⁴⁷ However, I do think that Kittay could learn from MacIntyre's focus on building local community support and a sense within these communities that care for dependents is something that we all owe to each other, given our need for this kind of care during our own times of dependency.¹⁴⁸ If Kittay can build a compelling narrative of how communal and governmental support could work together (instead of precluding or weakening each other's influence), she can potentially argue quite persuasively that she can adopt what is best about MacIntyre...while maintaining a liberal framework.

Both Kittay and MacIntyre could better acknowledge the reality that dependency on anyone or anything, whether that be the government, a local community, or a single provider, makes one vulnerable to exploitation. That does not mean that we should not acknowledge dependency and even celebrate the relationships which come from certain kinds of dependency, but we should not shy away from this reality. Although it can be easy to be optimistic about government during times of relative political stability and wealth, governments, like individuals and communities, are also susceptible to corruption, poor management, and a lack of attentiveness to the needs of its people. There is no perfect way to meet the needs of dependents because there is no perfectly reliable person or institution on which to depend. In Ch. 4, we will discuss whether Kittay's and MacIntyre's frameworks can be hybridized to provide a plurality of solutions, including increased local community support, an increased sense of responsibility to care for dependents and dependency workers in people who generally consider themselves to be independent, and a governmental affirmation of the importance of dependency work in the form of government assistance to dependency workers. But first, in Ch. 3, we will discuss an area of strong agreement between MacIntyre and Kittay: the ethics of interpersonal relationships.

¹⁴⁷ For an example, see Kittay's discussion of the dynamic between herself and Sesha's long-time caregiver, Peggy (Ibid, 158-160).

¹⁴⁸ Kittay can also be inspired here by the work of other care theorists in emphasizing the importance of mid-sized communities. See, for example, the already mentioned Piepzn-Samarasinha's "Care Webs," or Talia Schaffer's work on mid-sized communities in Victorian fiction in Talia Schaffer, "Care Communities: Ethics, Fictions, Temporalities," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 118, no. 3 (2019): 521-42.

Chapter 3: Shared Themes in Interpersonal Ethics

In Ch.1, we investigated MacIntyre's and Kittay's framing of vulnerability and dependency within their ethical frameworks. We saw how the same reality can be conceptualized differently given different foundational commitments. In Ch. 2, we saw these conceptual differences, especially about the appeal of liberalism and the role of government, come to a head in their large-scale solutions to the reality of dependency. In this chapter I will build a conceptual framework with which to investigate an area of great similarity and shared understanding between the two theorists: the ethics of interpersonal relationships involving dependency. Although these two theorists use their own language (and have their own emphases) in this area, their work on interpersonal relationships shares much in common. Here I bring together their work to demonstrate that the two theorists share three themes: 1) uncalculating care, 2) expanded reciprocity (which I argue is a community-based reciprocity), and 3) the moral place of emotions and desires. I will argue that these three themes offer a shared vision of interpersonal ethics which differs from prominent ethical systems in ways which align more with our intuitions and solve some common problems of these systems.

Shared Concepts for Interpersonal Relationships

Here we will investigate three shared themes in interpersonal relationships between MacIntyre and Kittay. We will see here that some of these similarities come from Kittay's willingness to engage with and utilize virtue ethics language to describe her care ethic. Although I will continue to refer to Kittay's work in *Love's Labor* in this chapter, I will also lean more heavily on *Learning from My Daughter*, given its interpersonal focus. Additionally, Kittay tends to take much more from care ethics than liberalism in her interpersonal ethic in both texts, so I will be referring to her framework as a care ethics framework in this chapter.

Uncalculating Care

The first shared concept is what MacIntyre calls "uncalculating" care, which is a moral commitment to meeting the needs of a person with whom one shares a relationship, regardless what their needs happen to be.¹⁴⁹ MacIntyre describes this commitment as an "effective, unconditional care

¹⁴⁹ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 126.

for the human being as such, whatever the outcome.”¹⁵⁰ He argues that this commitment to uncalculating care is especially important because there is no way we can know the particular needs an individual will have ahead of time. An individual may always develop unexpected profound dependencies, and those dependencies will need to be cared-for. As such, when we exist in a relationship with someone, especially in an intimate relationship with someone, we can never determine in advance how far we are willing to go to care for them: “We do not know just what they will need. We can set in advance no limit to those possible needs.”¹⁵¹ Our commitment to care is commitment to care for a *particular person*, regardless of what their needs end up being, and not to a set list of predetermined acceptable needs: “I also have to understand that the care that I give to others has to be in an important way unconditional, since the measure of what is required of me is determined in key part, even if not only, by their needs.”¹⁵² Here we see again, as we saw in his communal ethic, MacIntyre’s understanding of moral action being directly responsive to the needs of individuals.¹⁵³

For MacIntyre, this concept of uncalculability is intimately bound up with his concept of extended reciprocity, which we will investigate below. Because care is responsive to the needs of the individual, he argues that we must not calculate what we owe in response to what others have given us, because these two things may not be proportional: “What I am called upon to give has no predetermined limits and may greatly exceed what I have received. I may not calculate what I owe on the basis of what others have given me.”¹⁵⁴ This *refusal to calculate* is what leads MacIntyre to call good care “uncalculating.”

It is important to note here that MacIntyre does not mean that one individual must be responsible for all the emergent needs of an individual with whom she has an intimate relationship. Given that MacIntyre argues that all relationships of giving and receiving should take place within a community of giving and receiving, he would never say that one individual is responsible for meeting all the dependency needs of another. Some in a community will be *more* responsible, when relationships are more intimate, but given that many people in the community will have relationships

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 100.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 100. Although, as we will see MacIntyre utilizes parent-child relationships as the paradigm example of uncalculating care, he never limits uncalculating care to familial relationships.

¹⁵² Ibid, 108.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 109.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 126.

with a particular individual, increased dependency needs should very likely be rightfully spread out among many members of the community. The point that MacIntyre is making is not that an individual must shoulder impossible burdens in response to the dependency of another, but rather that, given that our commitment is to the individual and not the needs, we cannot shy away from a person with whom we have a relationship just because her needs have come to be more than we expected. As needs in another increase, our responsibilities will also increase, even if what we receive from that individual does not increase in proportion.

Kittay also understands good care to be in response to the needs of a *particular individual* and that our care is therefore responsive to the level of dependency of the other person: “The relations and moral obligations between the parties [in a dependency relation] are not the general obligations we bear to another person, whoever they may be, but special relations. In the case of specific relations, we have obligations that are particular to the individual in that relationship.”¹⁵⁵ She also mentions here that these obligations may not be explicitly chosen beforehand, given that, as MacIntyre says, we cannot know the future needs of an individual with whom we are in relationship.¹⁵⁶ Kittay argues that good care requires “open responsiveness to another.”¹⁵⁷

Both MacIntyre and Kittay turn to the test case of the parent-child relationship, especially to the parents of children with profound disabilities, to expand on this concept. MacIntyre uses this test case because he argues that treating children well is a perfect example of uncalculability, given that children are never able to give back in proportion, at least while they are children. He calls good childcare “a systematic refusal to treat the child in a way that is proportional to its qualities and aptitudes.”¹⁵⁸ He also argues that this is a good example of the particularity of care because parents are asked to care for the specific child they have, not some ideal child or some other person’s child, regardless of what their child may need: “[Parents] have to make the object of their continuing care and their commitment *this* child, just because it is their child for whom and to whom they are uniquely responsible.”¹⁵⁹ This unique responsibility comes from the intimate relationship between parent and specific child.

¹⁵⁵ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 53.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 53.

¹⁵⁷ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 172.

¹⁵⁸ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 90.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 90; emphasis original.

MacIntyre also argues that, given that good parenthood involves commitment to care for a particular child regardless of the particular needs, all parents must be prepared to parent a child with profound disabilities, even if they do not end up with any children who do have profound disabilities: “Good parental care is defined in part by reference to the possibility of the affliction of their children by serious disability.”¹⁶⁰ Because parents of children with serious disabilities live out commitment to their children regardless of need, MacIntyre argues that these parents are “the paradigms of good motherhood and fatherhood as such, who provide a model for and the key to the work of all parents.”¹⁶¹ Parenthood in these situations requires commitments often far beyond the commitments of a typical parent (and most likely beyond the theoretical commitments these parents imagined), and yet these parents keep these commitments because it is asked of them by their particular child. MacIntyre sees this commitment to the particular individual to be the goal of all parent-child relationships.

Kittay, who has a lifetime of practical experience caring for a daughter with profound disabilities, also focuses on this relationship to discuss unknown and unexpected needs in children. Summarizing her own experience, she says: “I tell the story only to remind people that plan as we may, we still lack veto power over the outcome. Still more important, I tell my story to underscore that love for one’s child does not depend on our plans turning out as we had intended.”¹⁶² Here Kittay draws on an instinct that we generally have about good parenthood—namely, that parents should (and often do) love and care for their children regardless of whether they are the children they expected or anticipated. Additionally, she argues that the intimacy and bond of the parent-child relationship can open parents to take on responsibilities in response to the particular needs of their child which they could not have imagined themselves taking on theoretically: “I have come to appreciate that what we fear in the abstract we might come to cherish when it is embodied in a beloved child.”¹⁶³ Here Kittay underscores the importance of the *relationship* in taking on unexpected caring: it is the relationship that calls us to respond to unexpected dependencies, but it is also often the relationship itself that gives individuals the strength and willingness to respond.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 91.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 91.

¹⁶² Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 65.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 59.

In both MacIntyre's and Kittay's understanding of uncalculating care in response to particular needs of an individual, we see an interesting shift in emphasis which is common to relational ethics. Contractualist ethics tend to focus on particular moral actions to ambiguous others. The focus is on what particular actions would be required of us, but the persons(s) to whom we do these actions are usually abstract or undefined. In both MacIntyre's and Kittay's ethical theories, however, the *person* to whom we act is defined, and the particular relationship we have with this other person and the particular dependencies and needs of this person take center stage. What moral actions may be required of us, on the other hand, become ambiguous—because these can only be determined in response to the particular needs of the person with whom we are in relation and so cannot be foreseen ahead of time. While many other ethical theories are interested in particular actions, these two relational ethics are more interested in, as the name suggests, particular relationships, whatever actions that particular relationship may require of us.

This ambiguity about actions may understandably make us nervous—Is there any limit on what we could be asked to do? Are there any provisions to prevent coercion or exploitation of those who care? Both MacIntyre and Kittay have answers, and Kittay is especially interested in this question. MacIntyre makes a distinction between two types of changes to a relationship, which I will refer to as *passive* and *active*. MacIntyre argues that we cannot alter our regard or our commitment to someone because of, something which *happens* to the other person (for example, she suffers an accident which makes her permanently paralyzed; she is diagnosed with a mental disorder; her house burns down in a fire, and she is now in need of somewhere to stay). Even when these passive changes increase the person's dependency in unexpected ways, it is wrong of us to walk away. However, sometimes the relationship changes because of an active decision on the part of the other person; she does something purposeful to harm us “by serious lies, by cruelty, by treachery, by victimization, by exploitation.”¹⁶⁴ In these cases, the other person has damaged the relationship between us, and so the relationship no longer holds sway over us in the same way it did before. We are therefore under less (or no) obligation to meet the needs of the other individual. In passive change, on the other hand, the relationship remains just as strong, even if it requires something more from us than it did before.

The line between these two types of changes (passive and active) seems fuzzier than MacIntyre gives it credit for. We can certainly think of cases where someone hurts our relationship

¹⁶⁴ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 128.

through no or limited fault of her own. What about depression, for example, which often comes upon individuals but which may influence one to withdraw from the relationship or act unjustly or unkindly towards others? What about addiction, for the same reasons? These cases may require a more nuanced response than either of the options presented to us by MacIntyre. However, this distinction seems to be a good start in the differentiation between relationships which still hold moral sway over an individual and those which do not.

Kittay does not use the same language as MacIntyre, but I argue that she makes a similar distinction. In a detailed section on how to prevent coercion of dependency workers in care relationships, Kittay argues that her notion of connection-based equality gives us the tools to differentiate between coercion and non voluntary but morally legitimate duties to care. Kittay recognizes that care may very well be more demanding on a dependency worker than other kinds of work and may require her to meet needs she has not voluntarily consented to meeting. In a chapter in the book *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, Kittay offers the example of a paid caregiver who is morally required to stay beyond her shift because the cared-for has a medical appointment which runs over time.¹⁶⁵ This is a perfect example of non-voluntary but morally required work. Even though this extra work was not part of the work that the dependency worker signed up for when she agreed to the position, she cannot simply get up and leave when her shift is over.¹⁶⁶ Kittay wants to explain why this type of non-voluntary care is morally binding in a way that coercive demands on a caregiver are not. She distinguishes between them in this way: “The individual coerced into doing dependency work is not being treated in a manner that is consistent with her as some mother’s child.”¹⁶⁷ Just as we can expect that a caregiver does not coerce a dependent, we cannot rightly coerce a caregiver into doing dependency work, because she too, like the dependent, is some mother’s child.¹⁶⁸ Here too, the nature of the relationship—whether it is coerced or not—is what determines if the obligations of that relationship have moral sway.

In both cases, it is not the nature of the obligations but the nature of the relationship which determines whether the needs of another obligate us to care. Obligations are only morally salient if

¹⁶⁵ Kittay, “A Theory of Justice,” 60.

¹⁶⁶ Kittay also points out here that this paid caregiver “has the right to demand that such overtime be well compensated” (Ibid, 60).

¹⁶⁷ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 72.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 73.

the relationship respects both people. (Of course, some types of obligations would never surface in a healthy relationship, and so the existence of these obligations may indicate that the relationship has become unhealthy. But the reason why the obligation does not hold is still because of the nature of the relationship.) So MacIntyre and Kittay hold up two types of caveats to uncalculating care: 1) Caregivers can only be expected to meet needs that it is possible for them to meet, and 2) Relationships can be corrupted such that they no longer have (the same) moral obligations over the caregiver. Even with these caveats, both Kittay and MacIntyre consider the moral requirements of relationships to be much thicker than moral theories whose paradigm relationships are those of the market.

Expanded Reciprocity

MacIntyre and Kittay also both hold to an extended notion of reciprocity, wherein our obligations come from some type of reciprocity, but not a typical individualized reciprocity. Although neither put it exactly in this language, I will argue that they are both referring to a type of community-based reciprocity. As we've seen already, MacIntyre argues that we cannot think of our obligations towards an individual as stemming from what that individual has given us because we are often asked to give more than we have received in a particular relationship. However, he does think that our obligations extend from a type of reciprocity. We have obligations to give because we have received (and many times we can only give because of what we have received): "We find ourselves places at some particular point within a network of relationships of giving and receiving in which, generally and characteristically, what and how far we are able to give depends in part on what and how far we received."¹⁶⁹ Importantly, MacIntyre argues that individuals are better able to participate in networks of giving and receiving when they are independent practical reasoners, and we become independent practical reasoners in large part through the investment of time, moral education, and care of others. So in this way his statement is true. But we can also think of much more basic examples: if our parents are able to help us financially with school, we are more likely to succeed, which in turn likely gives us better resources to give to others. If we are cared for well by nurses and doctors when we are sick in the hospital, we will in turn be able to take better care of our loved ones once we are well again.

¹⁶⁹ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 99.

However, as these examples indicate, we cannot understand this reciprocity in “strict” transactional sense because, as MacIntyre points out, we often receive from one group of people and give to another group: “Sometimes those others who rely on us are the same individuals from whom we ourselves received. But often enough it is from one set of individuals that we receive and to and by another that we are called on to give.”¹⁷⁰ Even when we give to the same individuals from whom we received, the manner and intensity of this giving may not be proportional to what we received.¹⁷¹ In fact, sometimes MacIntyre seems to dislike the notion of transactional reciprocity completely, because its connotations are not altogether helpful for the concept he is trying to impart. He argues: “To participate in this network of relationships of giving and receiving as the virtues require, I have to understand that what I am called upon to give may be quite disproportionate to what I have received and that those to whom I am called upon to give may well be those from whom I shall receive nothing.”¹⁷² However, despite his hesitations and caveats, he wants to maintain a pattern of giving and receiving which is reminiscent of the concept of reciprocity.

Kittay has a more fully elaborated understanding of extended reciprocity. She argues that the standard notion of reciprocity does not extend well to dependency relationships, so we need to “expand the notion of reciprocity, and in doing so open a conceptual space for dependency concerns.”¹⁷³ She calls the standard version of reciprocity, the idea of one individual giving an amount proportional to what she has received from that individual, “exchange reciprocity.”¹⁷⁴ She contrasts this notion with another understanding of reciprocity which springs from connection-based equality: “Since her mother gave care to her [own] mother, her mother is now owed care.”¹⁷⁵ Kittay explains that, in this case “the reciprocation is based *not* on the care her mother gave her daughter which she now expects her daughter to return. That would turn the mother’s care for her daughter into a sort of advance payment for later care—a maneuver typical of exchange reciprocity. The daughter instead invokes a set of nested obligations.”¹⁷⁶ Kittay’s concept of “nested obligations” is very similar to MacIntyre’s concept of a “network of giving and receiving.” Both phrases invoke a thick

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 101, 100.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 101.

¹⁷² Ibid, 108.

¹⁷³ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 106.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 67.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 67-68.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 67.

interconnection—of families, between generations, among neighbors or friends—which both stabilizes an individual in need and tugs that individual to give what she can when she can.

Kittay connects her understanding of extended reciprocity to Rawls' understanding of generational unfairness: one generation cares for the next and is cared for by the former, so generations cannot directly reciprocate care for each other.¹⁷⁷ She argues that this generational unfairness is a good example of the “an extended notion of ‘reciprocity’ (a transitive—if you will—responsiveness to our dependence on others).”¹⁷⁸ We must care for those we care for because they have cared for others, regardless of whether those others have been us. Here, Kittay uses the word “reciprocity” in scare quotes. Like MacIntyre, there is some resonance or analogy between what she is describing and the original concept of reciprocity, but she is also uncomfortable with some of its connotations. Most importantly, Kittay directly connects extended reciprocity to the principle of *doulia*, seemingly arguing that *doulia* is one example of extended reciprocity: “*Doulia* is part of an ethic that is captured in the colloquial phrase: ‘what goes around comes around.’”¹⁷⁹ Again, we see a pattern of giving and receiving here, but not one that can be described using the typical notion of reciprocity.

Both MacIntyre and Kittay want to maintain something about the concept of reciprocity, namely that there is a pattern of giving and receiving, of caring and being cared for, but they are both uncomfortable with using the term “reciprocity” without caveats. While both develop their notions of extended reciprocity, they are both somewhat vague on what exactly the relationship of their concepts to reciprocity is. I argue that their notions of reciprocity can both be described as *community-based reciprocity*. Specific cases of giving and receiving, of caring and being cared for, are usually interactions between specific individuals. When we view these actions on the level of individual relationships, we may be rightly uncomfortable referring to these interactions as reciprocal because, as both Kittay and MacIntyre point out, we do not always give to the same people in the same proportion that we received. We may give to people who never give to us, and we may be cared for by people who we do not care for. However, we *can* call these relationships reciprocal from the level of the community because we receive from members of the community and give to members of the community. Because we have received from a member of the community, our obligation is to give

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 87-88.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 107.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 107.

back to the community by means of caring for whichever particular members of that community we can care for. In other words, we owe care to a particular individual not because of what that individual has done for us but rather that individual's membership in a community which has (through other members) cared for us.

It is important to point out, however (as both MacIntyre and Kittay would and do) that what we give also must be in proportion to our ability. In this sense too, we cannot think of caring obligations as reciprocal, because we might be able to (and asked to) do more or less than what we received based on our abilities. Some people will necessarily receive more than they can give, and others will perhaps grow up receiving less care and support than they were owed but nevertheless take on much care for others. So while the notion of reciprocity can be helpful in emphasizing web- or network-like dynamic of give and take in a community, it may underemphasize the fact that care is most often about a) what the cared for needs and b) who is able to meet those needs.

Emotional Attunement

The third shared theme in interpersonal relationships is an understanding of emotions as being part of the moral response to care. This inclusion of emotion and desire as part of moral responses is part of many virtue ethics accounts, following from Aristotle's emphasis on the development of desires and emotions being part of moral development. But it also has frequently been part of feminist care ethics frameworks as well. Here, however, both MacIntyre and Kittay rely strongly on virtue ethics language to describe this commitment.

MacIntyre argues that in order to act with "just generosity" (which is his virtue of giving), we must "act from attentive and affectionate regard for [the] other."¹⁸⁰ Here he includes the emotional response of affection to be part of the virtuous response to another's need and so part of having the virtue of just generosity. Following Aristotle, he argues that part of moral education is a training of the emotions to respond appropriately to different situations: "Sometimes it is said that our affections are not our to command. But while in particular situations this may be true... we can of course... cultivate and train our dispositions to feel, just as we can train our dispositions to act and indeed our dispositions to act with and from certain feelings."¹⁸¹ Just as we can cultivate a habitual action, we

¹⁸⁰ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 122.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 122.

can also cultivate habitual emotional responses, so that we do not only act rightly but also act because of a right feeling or disposition.

MacIntyre takes a strong stance on the role of the emotions in moral action, specifying that action without the proper emotional disposition is imperfect action: “When we are so required, not to act from inclination is always a sign of moral inadequacy, a failure to act as our duty requires.”¹⁸² It is important to note that he does not argue here that caring without affection, for example, is worse than not caring at all. He instead takes the stance that caring without affection is always an act of imperfect care and a sign that there is room for improvement. It is certainly possible to take a softer stance on this question while still valuing the role of emotional responses as part of care, as Talia Schaffer does. She argues that “the feeling doesn’t determine the quality of care” but that “if all goes well, the feeling is bound to change. What’s important is intention: if you intend to give care, you initiate the performance process, regardless of your private feeling, and when you enact caring enough times it will (hopefully) come to feel true.”¹⁸³ Schaffer argues here and elsewhere in her paper on Victorian care communities that the proper emotive aspect of care develops when one performs the actions of care as if she already had the emotions. Although Schaffer disagrees with MacIntyre on whether the right emotions are required for good care, she still argues that when we do not see emotion evolving as the care relationship develops, we rightfully understand that as something gone wrong.¹⁸⁴ As I will argue later, this expectation of affections developing or being present during good care is an important part of our moral intuitions about good care.

It is in the discussion of the emotions, more than anywhere else, where Kittay is willing to adopt virtue ethics concepts to describe her understanding of care ethics in *Learning from My Daughter*. Specifically, Kittay argues that well cultivated emotions allow us to care better because we become more sensitive to the particular other in front of us, allowing us to better understand the needs of the other (which is an important aspect of good care): “Moral emotions draw us into the subjectivity of the other, allowing us to respond to this particular concrete other, not a generalized other.”¹⁸⁵ Importantly, for Kittay, moral emotions are not just an addition to moral action, but, at least in care, they support and strengthen one’s moral action. She argues in *Love’s Labor* that a “sense of

¹⁸² Ibid, 122.

¹⁸³ Schaffer, “Care Communities,” 532.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, 530.

¹⁸⁵ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 175.

attachment to others” and “an empathetic attention to their needs” are “in the context of care not supererogatory.”¹⁸⁶ These emotional attunements do not just check a moral box or offer an additional flourish on top of an already caring action, but rather they are a part of good care and so serve to make it better.

Kittay does caveat that duty can act as a stand-in for emotional motivations for good care, but that this situation is preferably short term.¹⁸⁷ My understanding of Kittay’s argument here is that duty can act as a safety net when emotional responses are not properly attuned in a particular situation (whether that is because a care-giver is tired, momentarily frustrated or annoyed, or having trouble connecting with the personality of the cared-for). However, care from duty cannot have, in the long term, the same attunement and sensitivity to the needs of the particular other. The idea here (and MacIntyre’s idea too), is that we ought to see acting from affection as one goal of our moral growth as caregivers and perhaps, when achieved more often, a sign that something is going well.

Kittay also weighs in on the moral education of the emotions with phrasing that sounds very similar to MacIntyre’s: “To counter the charge that emotions are unreliable, the care ethicist (in common with *other virtue theorists*) would reply by calling for an active cultivation of moral emotions and for the modeling of their appropriate use.”¹⁸⁸ Firstly, we see here Kittay’s argument for the importance of the purposeful cultivation of emotions and that someone with a strong moral education will be able to approach care with the proper emotional attitudes and responses. Secondly, Kittay refers here (and only here) to care theory as a type of virtue theory. In Ch. 4, we will discuss more in detail the nuances of Kittay’s opinion on care ethics’ relationship to virtue ethics. But we can see that here, in the realm of the emotions, Kittay fully embraces virtue ethics’ emphasis on the importance of emotional cultivation for virtuous action.

MacIntyre’s and Kittay’s shared emphasis on emotions as part of moral responses illustrate how both virtue ethics and care ethics pay much more attention to the role of the emotions in the moral life than many other moral theories. Notably, their stances reframe what is considered supererogatory in moral action. We often think of moral actions as being required, while corresponding emotions or desires are either a) not morally relevant, b) supererogatory, or c) in the

¹⁸⁶ Kittay, *Love’s Labor*, 101.

¹⁸⁷ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 195.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 175; emphasis mine.

case of Kant, corrupting the moral purity of the action's motivation. In contrast, both MacIntyre and Kittay argue that certain emotions, dispositions, or desires are highly relevant to and required for good care, and that, just like habitual actions, emotional responses can be cultivated.

I argue that MacIntyre's and Kittay's positions on the role of the emotions are in line with our intuitions about caring relationships. We generally think that caregivers (including paid caregivers) should act from a place of genuine affection for their charges, or, at the very least, they should act *as if* they had this affection. We generally think that something is wrong with the relationship if this affection is missing.¹⁸⁹ We can see this most clearly in the care of infants and children, where expressions of affection and the development of an emotional bond are expected parts of the care relationship, even for those who have external motivations, like monetary incentives, to care well. We can also see in the case of children that true affection from caregivers, whatever its personal or cultural expression, strongly impacts their development. It is not just a perk to receive affection and have emotional bonds with those who care for you; it is clearly crucial for healthy development—it is part of good care. In response to this need for affection and emotional bonds in dependents, both Kittay and MacIntyre would argue, caregivers have a moral responsibility to meet that need as far as they are able (and have access to additional support when this is difficult or impossible).

We have more complicated intuitions about other types of dependents, especially more “troublesome” or “difficult” dependents, including the elderly with dementia (especially if we struggle to have appreciation or affection for them because of a loss of emotional connection), mentally disabled adults, those with severe mental illness, and those with temporary dependency, like otherwise able-bodied adults recovering from surgery. These people, for various reasons, may be more difficult for caregivers to empathize with or develop an emotional bond. Sometimes we see the care for these groups of people as a mechanical meeting of physical needs, and we do not always expect those who care for them, especially paid caregivers, to act from a disposition of affection.

But it seems that both Kittay and MacIntyre would argue that affection and genuine regard must be cultivated in these care relationships as well in order for the cared-for to receive good care. It is of course important to note, as we discussed in the section on uncalculating care, that genuine oppression or morally salient mistreatment on the part of the cared-for towards the caregiver results in

¹⁸⁹ Schaffer makes this point effectively (Schaffer, “Care Communities,” 530.).

a breaking of the relationship, and so neither of them would morally require a child to care for their actively abusive parent, for example. However, they would both want to point out that if we want those with dependencies to receive good care, we must be cognizant of the fact that emotional sensitivity is a part of that good care, and that caregivers can and should strive to care from a disposition of affection, even if this affection does not come automatically or easily in a particular relationship.¹⁹⁰

The Role of These Shared Concepts in Moral Theory

These three shared concepts, that of uncalculating care, expanded (or community-based) reciprocity, and attunement of emotions, seem to solve a number of problems that other moral theories, with a greater focus on market relationships, have in accounting for the realities of dependency and resulting relationships. These concepts help us to elaborate on the effect of focusing on dependency for the development and emphasis of moral theory in several ways. We will discuss four of these ways here, specifying how they are related to the shared concepts outlined above.

Firstly, these shared concepts reframe what is considered morally necessary to better align with our intuitions about dependency relationships and community relationships more broadly. We have discussed how MacIntyre's and Kittay's perspective on emotion reframes it as a necessary part of moral action, but the concepts of uncalculating care and reciprocity also expand what is considered morally necessary. Uncalculating care does this by centering the needs of those being cared for, regardless of what those needs are. As we have seen, there can be no preconceived picture of what those needs might be, and so caregivers may be morally required to respond to needs with actions they did not expect ahead of time or which demand more from them than they thought the relationship would demand. This flexibility of obligation centers dependency relationships, which are necessarily dynamic due to the changing needs of (both) members, more than it centers market relationships, which tend to have much more rigid structure, in moral conversation.

¹⁹⁰ Many institutional factors may contribute strongly to a paid caregiver's inability to care from a disposition of affection. For example, many nurses have too many patients or not enough support to offer this type of care to each of their patients, and the work culture of many hospitals and nursing homes does not cultivate or support this type of care. I think that both MacIntyre and Kittay would lay blame on failures in moral education, failures in the structure and ethos of institutions, and lack of community support for caregivers before blaming individual paid caregivers for failures to care with emotional attunement.

Expanded or community-based reciprocity moves beyond viewing moral obligations through the lens of what Kittay calls “exchange reciprocity,” wherein what one is required to give is proportional to what one has received from that specific relationship. The expanded notion of reciprocity builds a network or web of community support, through which individuals receive from the community and give back to the community, usually through being cared for and caring for specific others. It increases the flexibility of moral obligation in a way which better aligns with our intuitions about the nature of most relationships and about why people should be motivated to care for others.

Secondly, these shared concepts define moral commitments as relational by centering the other person and her particular needs, not the moral act itself. As we have seen, uncalculating care shifts the emphasis of moral consideration from a specific act for a vague other to unspecified action for a specific other. The moral obligation comes from the relationship, not from the type of action. Additionally, we see in community-based reciprocity that the moral obligation of relationships is always situated within a community network to which we also have obligations (and expectations that others will meet their obligations to us).

Thirdly, these commitments emphasize the specific and responsive nature of moral action, not its generalizability to abstract situations with vague actors. In Kittay’s emphasis on emotional attunement, we see how important sensitivity to the specific needs of a particular person is for good care. We see this same emphasis on fulfilling the needs of the person as they manifest in uncalculating care. Both care ethics and virtue ethics place much stronger emphasis on situation-specific discernment than deontology or consequentialism does. MacIntyre comes down strongly on this point in his essay “What Morality Is Not,” in which he argues that when individuals make moral decisions, especially complex ones, they are not relying so much on universal maxims as on what is required of them in a given time and place, with specific relationships and circumstances.¹⁹¹ In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre also argues, following Aristotle, that law, for example, even if perfectly just, will need prudential application to specific cases: “Partially because laws are general, particular cases will always arise in which it is unclear how the law is to be applied and unclear what justice demands. Thus there are bound to be occasions on which no formula is audible in advance; it is on such

¹⁹¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, “What Morality Is Not,” *Philosophy* 32, no. 123 (October 1957) <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0031819100051950>, 335.

occasions that we have to act... ‘according to right reason.’”¹⁹² Thus we cannot rely only on moral rules; prudence is always necessary in the application of these rules in specific situations. Kittay similarly advocates for a situationally focused ethic. She says that care ethics has “regulative ideals,” but that it does not reason from principles to specific cases but rather looks to the particulars of the situation to determine what is right.¹⁹³ We see here another case where virtue ethics and care ethics come to strong agreement against other predominant frameworks.

Finally, we see that these shared themes allow MacIntyre and Kittay to embrace unequal dependencies and specific care needs, which are both morally relevant and unavoidable facts of life. Uncalculating care allows both theorists to acknowledge the fact that some people may have more needs than others and that needs are often highly individual and specific. Understanding that our responsibilities to care are to a person and not to specific actions ensures that people with greater than average dependency will have their needs met, even when these needs unexpectedly are greater than those in relationship with them anticipated. MacIntyre’s and Kittay’s engagement with concepts of reciprocity allow them to recognise that some forms of moral action may never be repaid directly by the person who received them. Given that this asymmetry is common to many forms of personal and community care, from parent-child relationships to care for the next generation through attention to environmental concerns, our moral systems need to be able to account for it.

Both Kittay and MacIntyre set out on their projects with an attempt to integrate the reality of dependency into moral frameworks which usually neglect it. As such, they are both setting out to build moral systems which are more realistic about the world we live in, more in line with our intuitions about our moral obligations in relationships, and so more resilient and flexible in the face of the complexities of the world. In this chapter, I have investigated their attempts to do this in interpersonal relationships, developing three shared concepts between their theories. I argue that these shared concepts especially highlight how both frameworks have advantages when it comes to being realistic about dependency, relationships, and our moral intuitions in spheres of life, like dependency relationships, where other moral systems tend to struggle. The amount of overlap between these two systems in the interpersonal ethics (and Kittay’s willingness to use virtue ethics concepts when describing her interpersonal care theory) may lead us to ask another question: Can we consider care

¹⁹² MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 152 (quoting Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1138b25).

¹⁹³ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 210.

ethics to be a type of virtue ethics? We will dedicate space to this question, as well as other questions about the relationship between the care ethics and virtue ethics, in Ch. 4.

Chapter 4: Framework Collaboration

In previous chapters, we have examined specific aspects of Kittay's and MacIntyre's work in relation to each other. In this chapter, we will take a step back from these specifics to look more globally at the types of collaboration possible between these two frameworks (and ethical frameworks more generally). In this chapter, I will introduce three basic types of collaboration between ethical frameworks which I call: 1) the critique model, 2) the learning model, and 3) the hybrid model. I will illustrate these types of collaboration using Kittay's and MacIntyre's frameworks—using some examples we have already seen and some new ones. At the end of the chapter, we will draw on our work from throughout the thesis to ask the questions: 1) Is care ethics a type of virtue ethics? 2) What exactly counts as a care ethic? I will argue that care ethics cannot become a type of virtue ethics without losing some of its distinctive aspects and that having care concerns is not enough to make an ethical framework a care ethic.

Types of Collaboration

Our discussions about Kittay's and MacIntyre's work on dependency in this thesis can give us some larger insights into the nature of collaboration between ethical systems. Firstly, we learned that having similar concerns is an excellent place to start (and might very well be a requirement) for collaboration, but it does not guarantee that two frameworks will situate this reality in the same way or propose the same solutions. Ethical theorists can have profound disagreements (both in core commitments and in proposed solutions) while starting from a place of concern about the same realities. This observation may seem trivial, but sometimes MacIntyre and Kittay are mentioned together in light of their work on dependency (and their understandings of disability) in a way which highlights shared commitments without mentioning differences—in other words, in a way that makes it sound like their shared concern automatically guarantees their agreement.¹⁹⁴ Secondly, we can see

¹⁹⁴ E. Frank Fitch, for example, states that MacIntyre “amplifies and extends the arguments outlined by Kittay [and two other philosophers]” on dependency (Fitch, “Moral Philosophy, Disability, and Inclusive Education, 172). Van der Weele et al. reference Kittay and MacIntyre in a list of those who argue that “care implies dependency, and this dependency...is fundamental to the human condition itself, as all of us are dependent on others to survive and flourish, at least in some stages of life” (Van der Weele, et al., “What is the Problem,” 2). These authors are not incorrect in their statements about MacIntyre and Kittay, nor are they wrong to consider them together. As we have seen, MacIntyre and Kittay share many commitments in common (especially in interpersonal ethics, which is the space most relevant to the work quoted here). However, these shared

there are several models of successful collaboration between ethical frameworks. In this chapter, I will introduce three: the critique model, the learning model, and the hybrid model. As each has its own goals, as well as its own strengths and weaknesses, the goal of this taxonomy is to lay out possible methods of collaboration, not to argue that one is intrinsically superior to the others.

The Critique Model

The critique model of collaboration uses the strengths, concerns, and questions of Framework A to point out weaknesses or unanswered questions in Framework B. This model is usually combative because it points out problems in Framework B without offering a solution. Revealing these problems, however, can certainly be productive by allowing proponents of Framework B an opportunity to solve the problem or offer a reason why the problem is not a real one. Of course, as we have seen in this thesis, it is also possible to come to an unproductive impasse when using the critique model because one theorist may just disagree with a key assumption or first principle of the other theorist—and so neither may be willing to budge on the issue. We have seen many instances of the critique model in this thesis, but here I will summarize the discussions on what I take to be two of the most important instances and explain why I see them as especially important.

Firstly, one of MacIntyre's key critiques of Kittay would likely be her commitment to liberalism and her attempts to integrate care into a liberal framework (like Rawls'). As we have seen, MacIntyre understands liberalism to be fundamentally agnostic about the ends of human life and so ill-suited to the kind of collaborative and communal discovery (both in word and in deed) of human ends which he sees as key to human flourishing. Perhaps more importantly for questions of dependency, he sees the liberal state and economic order to be fundamentally governed by what he calls the rules of power, which he argues ought to be subordinated to the rules of giving and receiving. Thus, MacIntyre would be highly suspect of Kittay's attempt to integrate the reality of dependency into a fundamentally individualistic framework and the principle of *doulia* (which MacIntyre would consider to be under the rules of giving and receiving) into a political and economic system concerned with the rules of power.

commitments and concerns make it all the more important to note Kittay's and MacIntyre's differing ethical frameworks, which manifest in substantial differences in approach and commitment, as we have seen.

This critique is especially important given that the relationship between liberalism and care ethics is still an open question in the literature. MacIntyre's perspective alerts us to Kittay's place within this larger conversation around the relationship between these two moral systems. Care ethics was originally explicitly formulated in opposition to an ethic of justice, so there is support in care ethics for fundamentally rethinking moral theory in a way which would replace justice with care altogether or subsume justice under a larger care framework.¹⁹⁵ Michael Slote, for example, argues that care ethics is fundamentally incompatible with liberalism.¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, he argues that care ethics (specifically empathy) can justify the good conclusions of liberalism and point out cases where it is wrong: "Care ethics gives us a better practical/normative answer than liberalism does to certain important political issues and, for that reason, a better account of the foundations of justice, as well."¹⁹⁷ Slote therefore argues that empathy is a better grounding for justice than "purely rationalist considerations."¹⁹⁸

Other care theorists argue that justice should be a limited principle under the larger framework of care. In Virginia Held's more recent work, for example, she argues (contra Slote) that "we must call on the principles of justice to champion rights, demand equality, and clarify fairness" and that care cannot do this work alone.¹⁹⁹ However, she argues that the ethics of care should be a "comprehensive morality," while justice is applicable in "the limited domains of the legal and the political."²⁰⁰ She argues that, accordingly, legal and political worlds can adopt "conceptions of the persons as independent liberal individuals" but that all other domains should recognize a more fundamental relational picture of the human person.²⁰¹ Here we see the strengths of a justice framework retained but only in domains where Held finds it necessary.

Importantly, both Held and Slote, despite their differences, both critique those who attempt to create hybrid liberalism-care ethics theories, specifically, in the case of Held, those who "accept existing moral theories, such as Kantian ethics, but revise them to include appropriate attention to

¹⁹⁵ Held, Virginia, "Care and Justice, Still," In *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, edited by Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington (Oxford University Press, 2015), 19.

¹⁹⁶ Slote, Michael, "Care Ethics and Liberalism." In *Care Ethics and Political Theory*, edited by Daniel Engster and Maurice Hamington (Oxford University Press, 2015), 38.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 44.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 45.

¹⁹⁹ Held, "Care and Justice, Still," 22.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 27

²⁰¹ Ibid, 34.

care.”²⁰² Held criticizes these theorists for conceding too much to justice-based ethics, while Slote argues that these types of hybrids will necessarily be internally inconsistent.²⁰³ While it is not always clear how much Kittay wants to retain from liberalism—on the one hand, she critiques what she calls the fictions of independence, and, on the other hand, she attempts to insert care concerns into Rawlsian theory—there is a case to be made that these critiques have some hold on her work. MacIntyre’s line of critique, coming from outside the bounds of care ethics, calls to mind Held’s and Slote’s critiques and may challenge us to consider Kittay’s relationship with liberalism more closely than it is normally considered within care ethics.

Kittay’s strongest critique of MacIntyre lies in her questioning of the idea that reason is necessary for human flourishing. As we have seen, she argues in *Learning from My Daughter* against setting reason as a requirement for human beings to flourish. As such, she has a much stronger case for why those without reason, especially the profoundly intellectually disabled, are capable of flourishing. As we have seen, MacIntyre does want to include the profoundly intellectually disabled in moral communities—and he argues that they have the ability, just like everyone else, to teach other members of the community important lessons about what virtue looks like. Additionally, it does seem like he is committed to them having some ability to flourish, but on the matter of how they are able to flourish without reason and what exactly this flourishing looks like, MacIntyre remains unfortunately silent.

This critique is especially important given MacIntyre’s desire to break down the distinction between the disabled and the non-disabled (which he argues is a result of taking dependency seriously). As we have seen, he argues that we all exist on a scale of disability and that those with disabilities should not be thought of only as a separate group of moral patients on which the non-disabled bestow moral acts. However, without a clearer argument for how the profoundly disabled can flourish, MacIntyre’s attempt to break down the moral distinction between the disabled and the non-disabled seems to simply have moved the distinction instead—now the line is between those with access to reason and those without.

²⁰² Ibid, 24.

²⁰³ Slote, “Care Ethics and Liberalism,” 38.

The Learning Model

It can be helpful to use the critique model to expose places of weakness or non-clarity which may become more obvious in light of a second theory. In many of these cases, we come away from the discussion seeing the theory “under attack” (as it were) weaker than we thought it was going in. But can we utilize differences between theories in a way which makes the theories stronger? This is a model of collaboration I call the “learning model.” In the learning model, we use Framework A’s strengths to propose ways of making Framework B stronger without compromising key aspects of Framework B. This style of model is less combative than the critique model because challenges here come with a solution already built in, and the goal is simply to strengthen Framework B as much as possible. It seems likely to me that finding use cases for the learning model will be rarer than the critique model, given that more conditions need to be met for its use. Regardless, there are likely many sources of learning which could occur between MacIntyre and Kittay, but here we will examine two of the most important.

MacIntyre could learn from Kittay’s attunement to the gendered nature of dependency work and the resulting disproportionate hardship that women suffer because of fictions around independence. When MacIntyre does mention gender explicitly, he does so in ways which indicate that he has probably been influenced by care ethics (and feminist ethics more generally) in his understanding.²⁰⁴ For example, he argues, contra Aristotle, that men need to be more like women in being willing to show their friends their grief and so burden them with it.²⁰⁵ He also argues that part of the reason for Aristotle’s failure to recognize the realities of dependency is because he did not consider the realities of those in his time and place who were most likely to experience dependency, including women, worth considering when building his ethical framework.²⁰⁶ These instances indicate that MacIntyre believes, like many care theorists, there is something parallel in the limitation of women in intellectual spaces and the failure to consider dependency as a morally relevant fact of life. He also indicates willingness to reform some male norms by looking to female norms for guidance—

²⁰⁴ As a reminder, MacIntyre references influence from Kittay and Held, saying: “Feminist philosophers have recently done something to remedy [the lack of acknowledgement of dependency], not only by their understanding of the connections between blindness to and denigration of women and male attempts to ignore the facts of dependence, but also...by their emphasis upon the importance of the mother-child relationship as a paradigm for moral relationships” (MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 3).

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 164.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 6.

also a common theme among care theorists. However, for the most part, MacIntyre is silent on the question of gender.

It is a bit hard to believe that MacIntyre does not consider gender an important part of the dependency puzzle, given women's predominance in caregiver roles and the connection in traditional gender norms between women and dependency work. MacIntyre may be purposefully presenting a mostly agender theory in order to argue implicitly that dependence affects all people, and that all people, not just women, have a responsibility to respond to the realities of dependency. Alternatively, he may have seen the relation between gender and dependency to be important but outside of his areas of expertise. Regardless of the reasons behind this decision, I argue that MacIntyre could benefit from a further influence from care theory's focus on the relationship between women and care. Specifically, he could argue that, given that women are more likely to care for dependents—and arguably historically more responsible for the kind of moral education that is required for children to become independent practical reasoners—the lack of strong communities of independent practical reasoning and the over-reliance on individual families to provide for (physical, moral, and intellectual) dependency generally has worse consequences from women than for men. He may also want to argue that men are more likely to be in a position to deny their dependencies (whether past, current, or in the hypothetical future) and so are less likely to understand the importance of responding to dependency in others and to building strong communities where communal action is responsive to need—which again burdens women.

This critique is an example of the learning model because MacIntyre does not need to sacrifice core commitments to make his argument stronger in this way. This more explicit layer of gender analysis does not have to overtake his focus on other themes in order to be effective at promoting his conclusions. Recognizing the disproportionate burdens borne by women which result from a lack of acknowledging dependency would only strengthen MacIntyre's arguments for strong communities and increased focus on the realities of dependency and our obligations to giving and receiving. The attention to gender disparities in caregiving and the impact of the fictions of independence on women is one of the strongest aspects of Kittay's work. I argue that MacIntyre could adopt that focus in a way which would only strengthen his framework.

What can Kittay learn from MacIntyre? Kittay could incorporate MacIntyre's focus on the importance of community, specifically in relation to the concepts of distributive mothering and

doulia. I argue that she could do so without adopting MacIntyre's skepticism about governmental support for dependency workers. Given its origins in "doula," the concept of *doulia* lends itself well to an understanding of the importance of communal support for dependency work. Kittay does seem to want to invoke some sort of communal support for dependency work through the concept (as well as through the concept of distributive mothering, which is the idea of spreading out burdensome dependency work to lighten the load on any specific individual). However, in *Love's Labor*, this possibility is overshadowed by Kittay's focus on using *doulia* to argue for governmental support. Regardless of Kittay's intention, *Love's Labor* ends up drawing a picture of strong governmental support in the form of payment for all dependency work (and, ideally, strong familial support), but not a lot of support through other avenues. Unfortunately, although *Learning from My Daughter* focuses more on interpersonal relationships, Kittay does not really expand on the concept of communal support here either, focusing much more on one-on-one relationships between a dependency worker and a dependent.

Kittay's theory would be strengthened by expanded upon on how *doulia* extends to community support of dependency workers and the obligations that non-family members have to dependency workers. We see that the topic of non-family support is a bit complicated for Kittay, at least in relation to her own life's circumstances—but even amidst nuance and unanswered questions, Kittay still speaks positively about her own experiences with non-family support in mothering her daughter Sesha.²⁰⁷ I argue that the nuance inherent in Kittay's personal experiences makes her well-suited to put forward a realistic, nuanced, and positive picture of what communal support could look like for dependency workers, especially those who are caring for profoundly dependent people and those who have been abandoned by family members. Kittay already has the perfect concepts to build this aspect of her moral framework, and there is nothing in her work which indicates to me that she would be against stronger communities. As I have argued, if Kittay can build a strong picture of community *doulia*, she will only strengthen her own framework by adding an additional level of

²⁰⁷ Specifically, Kittay tells about how she was uncomfortable about the relationship between herself and Sesha's long time paid caregiver, Peggy. She shares that she sometimes felt like she sometimes took on the role of a traditional father and Peggy took on the role of a traditional mother—in a way that was unjust to Peggy (Kittay, *Love's Labor*, 160). However, Kittay generally speaks favorably about the relationship—in light of how it provides Sesha with better care, relieves some of the burden from her and from her spouse, and allows Peggy to have a positive intimate relationship she would not have had otherwise.

support, *and* she will be able to better answer MacIntyre's critiques of her reliance on the government by putting forth a "both/and" approach to supporting dependency workers and dependents.

Hybrid Frameworks

A third possible model of collaboration is to use two frameworks to build a hybrid framework (Framework C). A hybrid ideally possesses the best of each model and can strengthen or expand the scope beyond what either of the individual models can do alone. Making hybrids comes with additional complications and costs though, as we will see. There are, in my mind, two ways to create a hybrid framework (or perhaps a scale, where these two possibilities are on each end). The first, which we will call an "integral hybrid," merges two frameworks in a way which honors the beliefs and commitments of both. This type of hybrid is perfectly faithful to both frameworks and does not have to decide what to sacrifice in order to create the hybrid. However, attempting to create an integral framework might mean that we do not get rid of weaknesses of one or both of the frameworks—especially if those weaknesses are the result of some central aspect of the framework. Additionally, given that most frameworks will have some sort of conceptual difference, a perfectly hybrid framework might not be possible.

The second end of the scale is what we will call a "patchwork hybrid," which seeks to create the best possible combination of the two frameworks, sacrificing aspects of the original frameworks to do so. In this type of hybrid, core commitments of one or both theorists can be sacrificed as long as the resulting framework is stronger (in some meaningful way) than the frameworks are separately. The good of this hybrid is to create a new (ideally internally consistent) framework which results in more seamless theorizing than using the two theories separately to answer different questions. This type of hybrid could certainly be very powerful—more comprehensive, with the strengths of both and the weaknesses of neither—but it also comes with its own set of potential problems. Firstly, one or both of the frameworks could become virtually unrecognizable, which could be a negative if we lose out on important features. We will see an example of this later in the chapter, when we examine attempts to subsume care ethics under virtue ethics. Secondly, there is a strong potential for the framework to be internally inconsistent. If we think of Kittay's framework as a patchwork hybrid between liberalism and care ethics (given that she is willing to throw certain aspects of liberalism away), we can see that it is difficult to execute this kind of fusion without incorporating contradictory ideas.

Can we build an integral hybrid between MacIntyre's and Kittay's frameworks? The work we have done already in this thesis should demonstrate pretty soundly that we will not be able to integrate these two frameworks completely without discarding key commitments of either or both theorists. In Ch. 2, we saw that large-scale commitment disagreements between the two philosophers, namely about liberalism's merits and which sphere of public life to focus energy, makes an integral framework impossible. An attempt to unite the large-scale solutions would especially ignore MacIntyre's hesitations toward the involvement of large liberal governments into dependency concerns. In addition, later in this chapter, we will see how integrating virtue ethics and care ethics generally forces us to forgo some of care ethics' key commitments.

Although we cannot form an integral framework, we can form a few different patchwork frameworks which unite the work of both philosophers in different ways. The first, and potential most effective, would be to create a model which applies each philosopher's work to the sphere where they have the most to say: Kittay to governmental policy, MacIntyre to mid-sized communities, and both to interpersonal relationships (because their work here has many shared themes and can build from each other well). This solution creates one framework which can speak to all three levels of human life and so covers more ground than either theory does independently. However, it would be difficult to call this patchwork framework theoretically consistent. There are plenty of places where we would have to ignore key disagreements between the two philosophers, including how to define flourishing, whether human communities can and should look for shared understandings of the human good, and the nature of liberalism. When we ignore these disagreements, we risk divorcing the philosopher's solutions from the moral context in which they were advocated, which may make the solutions lose their moral force.

If we try to maintain these conflicting commitments, we are applying different commitments to different spheres of life (the interpersonal, the communal, and the public). This fractional understanding of ethics is quite antithetical to the spirit of most ethical frameworks, but especially those with feminist influences, given that one of the goals of feminist ethics is to do away with the public/private distinction in ethical systems.

The safest possible place to build a patchwork framework is, as we have seen, in the interpersonal space. If we focus on Kittay's and MacIntyre's conceptual view of interpersonal relationships, we see, as we have seen in Ch. 3, a great number of shared themes. Importantly, within

this agreement, we also see different emphases and places of elaboration, which suggests that a hybrid theory would be richer and more comprehensive than either of the standalone theories. While we saw the start of this collaboration in Ch. 3, more work could certainly be done to build a framework which emphasizes the three commonalities (and others) while filling in the theory with places of focus and elaboration from both. My concern with this patchwork framework is that it ignores both Kittay's and MacIntyre's focus beyond the interpersonal and especially their unwillingness to separate interpersonal ethics formally from communal or political ethics. However, it is possible that we can focus on the interpersonal without that focus resulting in an obliteration of the theorists' larger commitments and their differences in other areas.

It is possible that neither of these hybrids offers a compelling alternative to the consideration of both these theories independently. This outcome is not necessarily a problem—as we have seen from the work of this thesis, these frameworks are each rich on their own and also provide interesting and productive outcomes when in conversation with each other, even if that conversation does not lead to a hybrid framework. We can be committed fully to one framework and still find something valuable in the similarities, critiques, or elaborations found in another framework. We can find flaws in a framework while still finding it an interesting critique partner for another framework (in which we also might find flaws). Although we ideally want our ethical systems to be internally consistent, we do not need two frameworks to be externally consistent with each other to talk fruitfully with each other.

Thinking More Broadly

Now that we have examined three different models of collaboration and examples of each type, we will investigate two more general questions about the frameworks of virtue ethics and care ethics. These questions both have larger conversations associated with them, so I do not claim to solve these problems—only to offer some observations and arguments based on the work done in this thesis.

Is Care Ethics a Type of Virtue Ethics?

Given similarities between MacIntyre's and Kittay's frameworks on the interpersonal level (and Kittay's willingness to use virtue ethics concepts when describing her care theory), can we consider care ethics to be a type of virtue ethics? Could we (or should we) subsume care ethics into

virtue ethics framework? Raja Halwani argues that the key components of care ethics can be subsumed under a virtue ethics framework by considering care an important virtue “among those that go into constituting a flourishing life.”²⁰⁸ Halwani argues that subsuming care into virtue ethics allows us to preserve the most crucial aspects and insights of care ethics while making it a stronger ethical framework.²⁰⁹ He is specifically concerned with helping care ethics withstand the common criticism that it needs input from other ethical concepts in order to function as a full ethic. For example, he argues that care ethics on its own cannot determine if a relationship is healthy or not, and he argues that we need the input of reason to discern this.²¹⁰ Situating care as one virtue among many insulates the new hybrid system from this problem by supplying care with many additional ethical concepts, like justice and prudence.

This (patchwork) hybrid system would also, Halwani argues, have the advantage of the access to all the moral tools from virtue ethics. Some care theorists are taking advantage of these tools already in more informal ways. As we have seen, Kittay adopts a virtue ethics approach to the emotions and their trainability, and she also explicitly uses MacIntyre’s concept of a practice (which is “any coherent and complex form of human activity” which provides “the arena in which the virtues are exhibited”).²¹¹ She also uses the concept of care as a virtue (in a hybrid system which considers care as other things too, namely labor and an attitude or disposition).²¹² Kittay also explicitly utilizes the Aristotelian notion of virtue being a mean between two vicious extremes in her discussion of care as a virtue. She states that care is a virtue between the two extremes of “over-solicitude” and “neglect.”²¹³ Some other care theorists also use virtue-like concepts to describe care. For example, Maurice Hamington describes care as “as much a methodology as it is an ethical theory. Care theory is nonideal and process oriented, directed toward building competencies.”²¹⁴ Although Hamington does not explicitly refer to virtues here, his emphasis on processes and building competencies sounds like virtue ethics’ emphasis on habit formation over the course of many virtuous actions. Kittay’s and others’ use of virtue ethics concepts to describe care indicates that these concepts are clearly of some

²⁰⁸ Raja Halwani, “Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics,” *Hypatia* 18, no. 3 (Autumn, 2003) (2003), 168.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 166.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 174.

²¹¹ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 169; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 187.

²¹² Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 171.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 171.

²¹⁴ Maurice Hamington, *Revolutionary Care: Commitment and Ethos*, Routledge EBooks (Routledge, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003368625-3>, 32.

use to care theory. Is that enough to suggest that care theory can just be a form of virtue ethics, as Halwani argues? Or does care theory lose some of its distinctive moral qualities by becoming a version of virtue ethics?

How would Kittay answer this question? In some places, Kittay's use of virtue ethics concepts to describe care ethics make it sound like she is also on board with Halwani's project (for example, as we have seen, she refers to care ethics as a type of virtue theory in one place in *Learning from My Daughter*). In addition, she clarifies in *Learning from My Daughter* that she does not necessarily consider care ethics to be a complete ethic.²¹⁵ Clearly Kittay is in support of care ethics collaboration with other ethical theories, given her attempt to blend care ethics with liberalism in *Love's Labor*. This care ethics-liberalism hybrid indicates, however, that she wants to leave care ethics flexible to collaborate with ethical theories other than virtue ethics, so she likely would not be enthusiastic about permanently subsuming care under virtue ethics in the way that Halwani suggests, which would effectively erase care ethics as a distinct ethic altogether. Importantly Kittay remarks that she does not see care ethics as fitting neatly into any of the three standard ethical systems (deontology, consequentialism, and virtue theory), so while she is certainly open to collaborations and using concepts from other ethical theories, she likely wants care ethics to enter into these collaborations as a free agent.²¹⁶

What would MacIntyre say? MacIntyre does not explicitly mention care ethics as much as Kittay mentions virtue ethics (at least in *Learning from My Daughter*). However, as we have seen, he is clearly influenced by the concerns of care ethics and takes on these concerns in a central way in his work. Given that he is happy to incorporate care ethics concerns (like dependency and vulnerability) and some key concepts (like centering parent-child relationships in moral theory and the concept of care, although he does not usually use that term explicitly) *within* a fully virtue ethics framework, it seems like he is at least implicitly on board with Halwani's project. In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre creates the type of framework that Halwani is envisioning: one which incorporates the concerns of care theory in a meaningful way into a thoroughly virtue ethics framework.

²¹⁵ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 135-136.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, 196.

I argue that we can certainly subsume care concerns under virtue ethics to create a care-inspired virtue ethics (as Halwani suggests and MacIntyre arguably accomplishes), but this hybrid ethic will not strictly be a care ethic. It will have lost crucial aspects of what makes care theory what it is. Maureen Sander-Staudt argues something similar. Firstly, she says that care ethics usually considers care to be *the* ethical concept, not just one of the most important.²¹⁷ She argues that in care theory, care is the moral standard by which everything else is judged. Care theorists might use the concept of virtue, but they would judge the effectiveness of virtue according to how well it allows individuals to care well. In virtue theory, by contrast, care would be scrutinized according to the standard of virtue (or human flourishing) instead.²¹⁸ Different understanding of what is morally prior creates a fundamentally different ethical system. Of course, for Halwani, this shift in focus would be beneficial because it would remove perceived problems with considering care as a sole ethical concept. However, Halwani is not deeply concerned with maintaining the integrity of care ethics.

Secondly and very crucially, care theory often employs a relational ontology, which takes relationships to be ontologically prior to individuals. A good example of this perspective is feminist and queer theorist Judith Butler's chapter "Violence, Mourning, Politics" in the book *Precarious Life*. Here, Butler articulates a "general conception of the human... one in which we are, from the start, given over to the other, one in which we are from the start, *even prior to individuation itself* and, by virtue of bodily requirements, given over to some set of primary others."²¹⁹ Here we see the notion that our relationality with others begins *before* we are even a fully individualized self. Butler is speaking of a temporal primacy here, but this temporal primacy also becomes an ontological primacy. Adoption of this relational ontology (although not unique to care ethics) makes care ethics thoroughly distinct from many other ethical theories, including virtue ethics.

Sander-Staudt argues that because virtue ethics is fundamentally focused on the flourishing of the individual moral agent, care ethics' unique relationality would be lost when subsumed under virtue ethics: "The relational ontology of VE emphasizes the relational aspects of being in terms of individual virtue development, whereas CE emphasizes the relational aspects of being in a much

²¹⁷ Maureen Sander-Staudt, "The Unhappy Marriage of Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics," *Hypatia* 21, no. 4 (Autumn, 2006) (2006), 35.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 35.

²¹⁹ Judith Butler, "Violence, Mourning, Politics," in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), 31; emphasis original.

broader sense. The relational ontology of CE construes the entire self as constituted, known, and maintained through relationship, and construes virtue as a quality that nurtures relationships appropriately.”²²⁰ Halwani argues that viewing relationships as ontological prior is a logical impossibility, and so he thinks that getting rid of this feature of care ethics would be an additional bonus.²²¹ Additionally, Halwani clarifies that virtue ethics is not a selfish ethic, given that virtues need to be acquired for their own sake in order to confer the benefits of flourishing on an individual. In other words, one cannot become virtuous merely for the sake of personal gain.²²² Although this is an important clarification to make, it does not fully answer the point brought forth by Sander-Staudt; individuals are still ontological prior in virtue ethics, even if those individuals are existing in genuine relationship and acting virtuously for the benefit of others.

Relational ontology is likely one of the biggest critiques of a proposed merger of care ethics under virtue ethics, but would this critique hold sway in Kittay’s version of care ethics? In other words, are relationships ontologically prior for Kittay? Kittay argues that the goal of care is the flourishing of the cared-for, which seems to place individual well beings as the goal of moral action in the same way that virtue ethics does (just with a different focus—virtue ethics on the agent and care ethics on the patient of the moral action).²²³ She also defends the importance of considering dependency and dependency relationships by citing how meaningful these relationships are to individuals. In both cases, Kittay’s liberal bent seems to lead her to draw the goals of care ethics in a more individualized direction than some other care ethicists. However, I will still argue that even Kittay’s form of care ethics cannot be subsumed under virtue ethics without losing key aspects of care which Kittay wants to conserve.

Sander-Staudt proposes that virtue ethics and care ethics can collaborate in ways that still leave care ethics intact and, importantly, allow it to collaborate and interact with other ethical frameworks.²²⁴ Care ethics, including Kittay’s care ethics, does seem to be more flexible than other ethical theories to incorporate and collaborate. Subsuming care ethics under virtue ethics as Halwani recommends would cause care ethics to not only lose its integrity as a distinct ethical framework but

²²⁰ Sander-Staudt, “The Unhappy Marriage,” 36.

²²¹ Halwani, “Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics,” 169.

²²² Ibid, 169.

²²³ Kittay, *Learning from My Daughter*, 137.

²²⁴ Sander-Staudt, “The Unhappy Marriage,” 37.

also would likely prevent it from doing collaborative work with other frameworks. Although I am not entirely convinced that care ethics is capable of acting as a stand-alone framework, I do argue that subsuming it under virtue ethics does not allow care ethics to maintain some of its most distinctive features. This merger can certainly lead to interesting and productive ethical frameworks, but, as we discuss more below, I would not describe these resulting frameworks (such as MacIntyre's) to be a form of care theory—they are likely better described as care-concern ethical theories.

It is important to note that Kittay and MacIntyre have some of the two most compatible care ethics and virtue ethics frameworks possible. Both are explicitly inspired by the other discipline and start from very similar concerns. In Ch. 3, we have examined especially how similar their interpersonal theories are and how many key themes they share. And yet, as we have seen, their theories have insurmountable differences which would make it impossible to combine their theories without disregarding the integrity of one or both. If these two theories cannot be easily integrated without losing something important, we should take that as a warning sign that attempts to integrate virtue ethics and care ethics will not be as seamless as we might like. We can certainly create a care-inspired virtue ethic, but we just need to know what exactly it is we are doing and not pretend otherwise.

What Counts as a Care Ethic?

Both MacIntyre and Kittay incorporate care concerns into another moral framework (virtue ethics and liberalism respectively). However, Kittay considers herself (and is considered by others) to be part of the care theory tradition, whereas MacIntyre does not claim to be. This distinction raises an interesting question: What counts as a care ethic? Is it enough to raise care concerns? Or are there more substantial aspects which need to be present to call something a “care ethic”? This question is a large one, and still something with which care ethics is understandably grappling, considering it is a relatively new theory in the long history of philosophy. Additionally, most ethical theories do not have completely solid boundaries—different proponents of a theory may have different criteria for inclusion, and some may claim to be a part of a tradition while being rejected by the majority of that tradition. This question is especially complicated for care ethics because Western care theory has very explicit feminist roots and is difficult to detach from this context, but there are other non-Western care theories which do not share this same historical origin. However, I would like to offer a few preliminary reflections based on the specific context of MacIntyre and Kittay.

It seems to me that having care concerns, like thinking about vulnerability and dependency and considering them relevant aspects of reality for moral theory, does not in itself make you a care theorist. It is a necessary but not sufficient condition. In order for an ethic to be a “care ethic,” it needs to also take a certain approach to understanding and answering to these realities. Hobbes, for example, takes human vulnerability as central to his picture of human beings—but he sees the fundamental human response to this reality to be one of conflict rather than care. As such, his attitude toward the reality of vulnerability and his proposed solutions are antithetical to those of care ethics. However, given that there are various disagreements and contentions within care ethics, it is not always straightforward to determine what the requirements are to be a care theory. A good place to start is Maurice Hamington’s and Daniel Engster’s shared introduction to the book *Care Ethics and Political Theory*. They propose that a care ethic elaborates on the following themes:

- 1) “A relational approach to morality,” where “human beings are fundamentally relational and interdependent.”
- 2) “Responsiveness to the other,” where “the other’s needs” are “the starting point for what must be done.”
- 3) “Context matters,” which means that care ethics starts from a “particularism” rather than abstract principles or rules.
- 4) “Crossing moral boundaries.” Care theorists hold that “caring should not be a compartmentalized activity of a few people in the private sphere.” Therefore, care theory breaks down distinctions between the public and the private and between morality and politics.
- 5) “Emotions as informative and motivating moral tools.”²²⁵

It is not surprising that Kittay, as a claimed member of care theory, would hold to all these themes. The more interesting question is whether MacIntyre’s work does. There are a few themes which we can affirm without much contention: MacIntyre takes a responsiveness to the other’s needs as central to care; he is committed to a particularist ethic; and he sees emotions as a (positive) aspect of moral responses. Although MacIntyre does not explicitly use the language of “crossing moral boundaries” or breaking down binaries between the personal and the political, etc., his commitment to

²²⁵ Engster, Daniel, and Maurice Hamington, eds, “Introduction,” In *Care Ethics and Political Theory* (Oxford University Press, 2015) 3-4.

foregrounding the rules of giving and receiving in political and economic as well as communal and interpersonal life suggests that his ethic fits this criteria. Interestingly, he also moves the site of deliberations about the ends of human life from the private to the public (both communal and political) sphere, which is not even a move usually made explicitly by care ethicists.

So we only have one question left: Does MacIntyre have a relational approach to morality? According to virtue ethics standards, he definitely does; he argues that human beings can only reach flourishing through the support of others: “I am never able to seek for the good or exercise the virtues only *qua* individual.”²²⁶ Care ethics, however, *may* have a higher standard—that of relational *ontology*. As we’ve seen, those who have a relational ontology posit relationships to be fundamentally prior to individuals. As Butler argues, we are in relation before we are differentiated. Given that MacIntyre considers himself within the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition, he would likely see individuals to be fundamentally prior to relationships. Relationships are necessary for flourishing (and we cannot hope to discover the end of human life outside of the context of a community and an intellectual tradition), *but* flourishing is still a state of the individual. A community can also flourish, but only when composed of individuals who flourish. It is unclear, however, whether Hamington and Engster are referring to a relational ontology here, or if it would be enough to consider relationships fundamental to human survival and well being. Relational ontology is a bit of a high threshold (as I have said before, I am not sure if Kittay crosses it), and Hamington and Engster do not use the specific terminology, so it is possible that they are taking a softer approach here. It depends a lot on what work the word “fundamentally” is doing here.

But at least on one reading of this list, MacIntyre fits the criteria. But it would still be strange to everyone (including MacIntyre himself) to call him a care theorist. What is the distinction, then? Interestingly, we might be able to use MacIntyre himself to answer this question. In *After Virtue*, he discusses the concept of an intellectual tradition. He states: “All reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional model of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition.”²²⁷ He also argues that: “when a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose.”²²⁸ What counts as a tradition is rather

²²⁶ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 220.

²²⁷ Ibid, 222.

²²⁸ Ibid, 222.

wide-ranging for MacIntyre; he uses modern physics and medieval logic as examples. Care ethics, then, probably would constitute a tradition for MacIntyre: it is a living argument about the goods of care. Importantly, not everyone who has ever discussed care is part of the care tradition because “a living tradition...is an historically extended, socially embodied argument.”²²⁹

In other words, members of a tradition exist in some sort of purposeful and communal relationship with each other, even across generations. To be part of the care tradition, one must see herself as contributing to a multi-generation intellectual argument about the goods of care and how best to achieve them. So while MacIntyre is certainly inspired by care theory and shares many of its concerns, he sees himself as part of the argument of a different tradition (that of Aristotelian-Thomistic virtue ethics), and it is this tradition’s goods that he puts first and foremost, even if he sees the goods of care as a primary method by which to get there. This all might just be another way of saying what Sander-Staudt says is a key distinction between care ethics and virtue ethics. In care ethics, care is the standard by which everything is judged. In virtue ethics, it is human flourishing.²³⁰

Throughout this thesis, I have put Kittay’s and MacIntyre’s frameworks into conversation. Given wide sources of agreement, especially in centering care concerns and relationships, their interpersonal ethics, and even similarities in their relationships to their traditions (liberalism and virtue ethics respectively), it is not surprising that these conversations have been enriching and fruitful. To take just one example, I have argued that a patchwork hybrid model of their views on interpersonal relationships may be especially fruitful. However, at the end of the day, Kittay and MacIntyre belong to two different ethical traditions. We can see the impact of their commitment to these traditions on their differing core commitments. We can bring Kitty and MacIntyre into collaboration, but we must not forget that their work ultimately contributes to two different conversations.

²²⁹ Ibid, 222.

²³⁰ Sander-Staudt, “The Unhappy Marriage,” 35.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have sought to put forth a systematic comparison of Kittay's and MacIntyre's work on dependency and vulnerability, focusing especially on their respective 1999 books *Love's Labor* and *Dependent Rational Animals*. In Chapter 1, I discussed both philosophers' attempts to integrate realism about dependency into ethical traditions which usually ignore it—liberalism and virtue ethics respectively. I argue that we see a parallelism in Kittay's and MacIntyre's critiques of these ethical theories and their desire to maintain as much of the tradition as possible despite these critiques. This tricky balance leads to some interesting potential inconsistencies in the theories. Specifically, Kittay seems to oscillate between two definitions of equality (one being liberal, one being a care ethics connection-based equality) depending on the context and the person in question. MacIntyre's desire to include the profoundly disabled as more than moral patients but as members of the moral community who have some ability to flourish seems to be at odds with his commitment to reason-based flourishing. These inconsistencies become clearer when we consider them in the light of the commitments of the other theory.

In Chapter 2, I focused on the philosophers' large-scale responses to the reality of dependency, illustrating Kittay's argument for government-paid dependency work and MacIntyre's for strong moral communities who seek after a shared notion of the good and act in response to need. Throughout the chapter, I utilized the work of each philosopher to offer questions and commentary to the other. Here we saw possibly the biggest sources of disagreement between the two philosophers, which I argued was a result of fundamental differences in framework commitments. This chapter demonstrates well why concern for the same realities (dependency and vulnerability) will not necessarily lead to the same proposed responses, especially when working with different background commitments and understandings of human beings.

In Chapter 3, I discussed Kittay's and MacIntyre's interpersonal ethics, which are much more similar to their large-scale responses. Here, we saw three shared themes (although there are likely more which could be discussed): uncalculating care, expanded reciprocity, and the importance of emotions in moral responses. We see this overlap at least partially because of MacIntyre's willingness to be inspired by care ethics and Kittay's explicit use of virtue ethics concepts. I argued here that these shared themes place both MacIntyre and Kittay in a better place to respond to our instincts and our lived experiences around responses to care than many other ethical theories.

In Chapter 4, we stepped back to examine what examining these two frameworks together can teach us more broadly. Here, I introduced three models of collaboration between ethical theories: the critique model, the learning model, and the hybrid model. I offered examples of each model from our two frameworks, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each form of collaboration. Finally, we examined what the conversation between these frameworks can tell us about two meta-ethical questions: 1) What is the relationship between virtue ethics and care ethics? and 2) What counts as a care ethic? In response to this first question, I argued that a care-concern virtue ethic is possible (using MacIntyre's framework as an example) but that such a framework is not a care ethic because it is missing distinctive aspects of care ethics, including its relational ontology and focus on care as the central moral concept. To begin to answer this second question, I utilized the concept of a "care concern" which was introduced in this thesis and offered MacIntyre's understanding of an intellectual tradition as a place to start.

Because I attempted to cover a lot of ground in this thesis, I introduced many concepts and questions which certainly could use further elaboration or conversation. Firstly, I am further interested in potential collaborations between MacIntyre's work and the work of care theorists other than Kittay. As we've seen briefly in this thesis, there may be other sources of fruitful comparison. Investigating the relationship between MacIntyre and care theory more generally may also shed further light on the question of what exactly separates a care ethic from an ethic with care concerns. Secondly, it would be interesting to test the three models of collaboration developed in this thesis on other ethical framework collaborations to see if they hold water. I would be interested to see if the amount of overlap in concepts and concerns between two theories change the way these types of collaborations unfold. Thirdly, my discussion of Kittay's relationship to liberalism could certainly be expanded upon and further investigated. I am interested especially in the relationship between Kittay's commitments to liberalism in the context of the opinions of other care ethicists on the relationship between care ethics and liberalism. Finally, MacIntyre's and Kittay's shared interpersonal ethic could certainly be expanded upon—both theoretically and practically. There are likely other shared themes which could be noticed and discussed, and this rich ethic could be applied to many practical areas beyond the examples they provide, including doctor-patient or nurse-patient relationships, elderly parent-child relationships, and friendships (which we tend to view the most transactionally of all intimate interpersonal relationships). I hope that this thesis has laid the

groundwork in a continuing conversation about the work of Kittay and MacIntyre in a way which makes these further discussions possible.

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