SOCIAL SCIENCES

**A Quarterly Journal of the
Russian Academy of Sciences
and the RAS Institute of Philosophy**

IN THIS ISSUE

SOCIAL SCIENCES
Volume 55, Number 1, January-March, 2024

FOUNDED IN 1970

SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Anthropological Turn of Virtue Ethics: The Revival of Aristotelian Ethics in the Second Half of the 20th Century

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Abstract. This article examines the specifics of virtue ethics as an anthropological turn in the moral philosophy of the 20th century based on Aristotle's ethical ideas. The purpose of this article is to show that the way these ideas were borrowed determined the direction of the thematic development of virtue ethics in conceptualizing the moral assessment of human activity and at the same time, created the main conceptual difficulty – i.e., the problematization of human nature, a challenge that has yet to be met. To that end, this article provides an analytical review of the main works of the more significant representatives of virtue ethics and systematizes their references to Aristotelian philosophy. It is explained that Aristotle's philosophy is invoked above all in developing the approach to determining the moral content of an act in a specific situation, where the application of a universal rule has to be complemented by a host of situational conditions, as well as in an attempt to bring back motive and personality qualities to the description of such conditions. The latter also involves the conceptualization of personal qualities as the moral state of a person, correlated with that person's development (possibly by nature and in reality through interaction with other people). The author concludes that virtue ethics borrowed some of Aristotle's ideas, but did not provide a deep analysis of his philosophy. As a result, the problem of conceptualizing human nature was not solved, whereas it could have substantiated the possibility of moral assessments of an act that are not reduced to calculating its consequences and do not require an appeal to a transcendent legislator or the abstraction of duty. The achievements of virtue ethics show that (1) one cannot selectively return to moral philosophy isolated concepts from the past, and a comprehensive description of the phenomenon of morality in human activity is necessary; and

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(2) the return of old concepts also brings back the unresolved problems of old moral theories (in the case of virtue, it is the problem of making choices and forming a moral disposition).

Keywords: ethics, morality, virtue, communication, anthropological turn, virtue ethics, discourse ethics, Aristotle, Anscombe, Foot, McIntyre, Nussbaum, Habermas.

https://dx.doi.org/10.21557/SSC.96151652

The second half of the 20th century saw the emergence of a new trend in moral philosophy – i.e., the ethics of virtue – which began with a critique of the moral theories prevalent at the time. Emotivist "exposure" of morality, divesting it of any rationality, tended to depreciate moral assessment of human activity. Utilitarianism, followed by pragmatism, banished from moral philosophy the problem of motive and the development of personality as moral improvement, while calculation of the consequences of an act (for the sake of which these theories arguably were developed as an alternative to allegedly abstract and far-fetched moral theories) turned out to be bounded by an equally far-fetched and fuzzily explained concept of universal good and failed to attain the clarity of a mathematical process. Analytical ethics, whose popularity rivaled that of pragmatism, proved too speculative, built as it was on logical constructs of mind experiments, and was even more removed from the concrete human act, from the human being who has not only reason, but also passions, desires, and hidden motives. The approach to morality in terms of duty also proved unsatisfactory, being an abstraction as foggy as the concept of universal good and, moreover, leading into the realm of the transcendent, just like grounding morality by invoking the transcendent legislator. This jumble of reductions (to emotions devoid of moral content, rationality, and the transcendent) stimulated a search for other approaches to understanding morality. What happened can be called an anthropological turn – away from any reductionism toward a moral philosophy that tends to embrace the fullness of human activity (without devaluing moral decision based on emotions, without reducing it to merely a rational process, and without explaining it using abstractions extraneous and alien to it). The return of the concept of virtue was meant to provide the most complete description of a moral act by, on the one hand, characterizing the moral development of a personality in all its complexity (motives, emotions, habits, etc.), i.e., without reduction to rationality, and on the other hand, by supplementing the description of the moral choice situation, i.e., without reducing moral choice to a calculation of consequences or the performance of a duty.

In the search for a conceptual foundation of such a turn, oriented toward detailed study of human nature, representatives of the new trend turned to the philosophy of Aristotle. In the whole history of philosophy, there has never been a period when Aristotle's ethical teaching was merely known but not relevant, for it

has always received a fair amount of attention. However, the special relation to this teaching in virtue ethics warrants the term "new relevance," because the teaching acquires not only ideological but also methodological significance. Strange as it may seem, the first to turn to Aristotelian analysis of the qualitative certainty of human activity were two scholars who had made their mark on the development of *analytic* ethics: Elizabeth Anscombe and Philippa Foot. So the history of the revival of Aristotelian ethics should start with them. I am not going to dwell on the researchers' own reflections on what trend they and their colleagues belong to, since it has long been a separate debate. For example, Martha Nussbaum would have objected to such localization of her ideas because she believed that it would be more appropriate to "speak of Neo-Humeans and Neo-Aristotelians, of anti-Utilitarians and anti-Kantians," and even then only in extremes, because any divisions tend to constrain thinking and lead to stereotyping [22]. Roger Crisp takes a similar stand, speaking about the blurred boundaries of ethical theories today [9]. However, I am interested above all in the relevance of Aristotle's ideas and their role in what may be called the anthropological turn in modern ethics and the revival of the concept of virtue. In this case, the generalization "virtue ethics" is quite workable, while "Neo-Aristotelianism" calls for a broader thematic sweep.

Anscombe in her article "Modern Moral Philosophy" criticized the moral theory based on the concepts of duty and moral law. She focused on the impact of Henry Sidgwick's utilitarianism. Later, developing her ideas, Alasdair MacIntyre would give a more detailed account of the situation in moral philosophy in the mid-20th century in his book *After Virtue*. As a result of this critique, Olga Artemyeva writes, virtue ethics developed in "opposition to the prevalent deontological (Kantian) and consequentialist (including utilitarian) ethical approaches" [5, p. 433]. Assuming the moral law (rule) to be hollow, in terms of content, without the will of the transcendent legislator, Anscombe claims that moral theory is degenerate, because it is incapable of capturing in general concepts the concrete content of an act, such that only the consequences of an act are amenable to analysis. Anscombe calls this approach consequentialism and "shallow philosophy," because it is insensitive to "borderline cases" [2, p. 10] – i.e., cases where the morality of the content of an act is determined with due account of nuances of the situation in which the act is performed, including the motivation of the actors (whether or not Anscombe's critique is valid is less important than its influence on the emergence of a new trend in ethics).

To take account of the whole complexity of the situation of a moral act, Anscombe argues, we have to speak about norm, not as a universal rule, but only as the virtue of the person as possessing all the virtues accessible to that person. This is no longer the standard of an individual act, but the standard of the development of a person in general. In other words, Anscombe paints an image of a sage as seen by ancient philosophy, Aristotle in particular, but she does so through a peculiar simile, comparing a "complete set of virtues" to a "complete set of teeth" as a species norm. Virtues are characteristics of man as such in regard to human "activity of thought and choice" [2, p. 12]. She sees this as offering the possibility to get rid of the formalism of hollow concepts, "to discard the notion

'morally ought' " [2, p. 15]. Artemyeva thus explains the decision to switch from the concept of law to that of virtue:

> Anscombe sees the advantage of this approach in that here the concept of norm is not in any way associated with ought, the right and other meaningless notions to overcome formality and abstractness – norms are invested with concrete content, reclaiming for virtue ethics the substantive concept of morality that has been lost in modernity [6, p. 104].

This makes it possible to make "responsible decisions and act in accordance with them in concrete, unique situations that cannot be reduced to any rules, principles and laws" [6, p. 105].

Having recognized such an alternative as a way toward a better understanding of the content of the act, Anscombe immediately runs into all the problems that Aristotle wrestled with: inclusivity of good, defining the boundaries of a virtuous act as distinct from vice, and most importantly – something Anscombe calls "a huge gap" in philosophy – the need to give "an account of human nature" [2, p. 15]. But in mentioning these problems, she seems to be turning a blind eye to the fact that it is precisely their unresolved nature, the rigid connection of the conceptualization of such concepts as "virtue" and "nature" to ideological (especially religious and somewhat peculiar philosophical) attitudes, that prompted the search for new – more universal and less value-related – paths to understanding moral assessment. The complexity of re-emerged problems became the basis for the critique of virtue ethics. Not surprisingly, Anscombe supported the Catholic church, which forbade abortions and contraception, thus turning to the transcendent legislator [11, pp. 40-45]. Thus, Anscombe's protest-driven turn to all-round analysis of human activity, taking its cue from Aristotle, laid the foundation for a new trend in ethics, but re-emerged old problems brought her back to religion.

Following Anscombe, her colleague Philippa Foot addressed the problem of virtue, and she also proceeded first and foremost from Aristotle. In her article "Virtues and Vices," she practically follows Aristotle in speaking about virtues as characteristics determined by (1) good will and knowledge, (2) the capacity to control one's passions, and (3) the aim of the act. She complements Aristotle with Thomas Aquinas, saying that "it is possible to learn a great deal from Aquinas that one could have got from Aristotle": first and foremost his elaboration of virtues – faith, hope, and charity [12, pp. 1-2]. Foot focuses on moral virtues, setting aside other connotations of the concept of "ἀρετή" (virtue), and calling justice and mercy "cardinal virtues." Implementation of these virtues encounters one of the most complex ethical problems (the relation between one's own and another's good). On the one hand, it is lack of justice and mercy above all that makes people unhappy – all people: Foot speaks about "wretched places to live" such as "Russia … under the Stalinist terror" and "Sicily under the Mafia." On the other hand, the question arises: If virtue is good, "to whom does the benefit go: to the man who has the virtue or rather to those who have to do with him?" [12, p. 3]. As predictably as Anscombe, albeit not directly, but through the question of values, Foot faces the problem of fundamental criteria – i.e., the conceptualization of human nature. Why are "some pursuits more worthwhile

than others" (intrinsically, and not for the realization of somebody's interests)? "I have never seen, or been able to think out, a true account of this matter," she admits [12, p. 6]. But it is clear to her that Aristotle had to solve this problem for every individual in one's personal experience through the virtue of good judgment (or soundness of mind). She finds an interesting solution to the problem of the mean (measure) as distinction between virtue and vice through the metaphor of poison: Depending on the dose and purpose, poison may be useful [12, p. 16]. It is an apt example (although Foot does not elaborate on it), because it shows that an individual is potentially neutral (indeterminate) – neither bad nor good. In fact, one and the same act may be bad or good depending on the goal and degree (measure) of its implementation. In that sense, the Aristotelian concept of virtue exhibits indeterminateness of the act itself.

Conceptualizing virtue is obviously a key task of virtue ethics. Thus, it would not be irrelevant to stress the difficulty of determining what is good/moral in an act, something that Aristotle focuses on and virtue ethics has not dealt with. The most heuristic here is the attentive view of another who saw new relevance in Aristotle's philosophy – Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

Proceeding from the assumption that virtue is a "unity in which the rational is preeminent," though not the exclusive element, he argues that such unity contains "an illogical aspect" (sensuality), such that the mean (measure) is called "the principle of virtue." That is how Aristotle, according to Hegel, conceptualizes balance, the avoidance of excess, which is characteristic of sensuality. As a result, determination of virtue through the mean "does not appear to be a sufficient definition, and it is merely a quantitative determination, just because it is not only the Notion that determines, but the empirical side is also present." Virtue, then, gets an "indefinite determination." And Hegel follows up with what I think is the most accurate description of the ethical problem (as elaborated by Aristotle and as it is treated to this day, which also gave rise to the ethics of virtue in the 20th century):

> In our way of looking at things (i.e., in post-Kantian philosophical tradition – *R. P.*), duty is something absolutely existent in itself, and not a mean between existent extremes through which it is determined; but this universal likewise results in being empty, or rather undetermined, while that determinate content is a moment of being that immediately involves us in conflicting duties. It is in practice that man seeks a necessity in man as individual, and endeavours to express it; but it is either formal, or as in particular virtues, a definite content, which, in so being, falls a prey to empiricism [16, pp. 204-206].

Hegel juxtaposes the emptiness of duty as something existent in itself to the "indefinite determination" of virtue that arises from its being dependent on "empiricism."

Aristotle does not speak about duty, but his contradistinction between epistemic and practical knowledge identifies the same problem, the relationship between the general and the particular, the epistemic inexpressibility of the "moment of being" in which "man as individual" realizes himself through a concrete individual act. How does one guide man toward such a realizing act, or rather, the right act? How does one determine that an act, always singular, is right? How does one convince oneself of its correctness? Aristotle's view of the nature

of virtue should have helped answer those questions. Otherwise, what would have been the point of elaborating ethical problems with such an ineffective key concept? So Aristotle had to abandon the concept of "virtue" unless he saw in it something more than an "indefinite determination" of the mean. Although Hegel holds that this "difference of degree" accords with "the nature of things," it is more likely that the shakiness of the concept of mean is a consequence of its auxiliary role, secondary functionality – that it is more a road sign than a guide to action. So sharp is Hegel's vision that he practically foresees the analytic of the champions of the virtue ethic and the critique of this ethic. But curiously, neither Anscombe, nor Foot, nor later representatives of virtue ethics pay attention to him, not even when they polemicize with their opponents.

One of the main tasks for Anscombe and Foot, as well as Alasdair MacIntyre, an equally well-known philosopher who appeals to Aristotelian ethics, is reintroducing into ethics a problem area of inner life – motive. Like in the case of determining the moral content of a concrete and individual act, good judgment and the act of making a choice become central.

MacIntyre, like Anscombe, says that today we have "simulacra of morality," having "lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality" [17, p. 2]. But this happened in the context of the development of European culture (more precisely, "academic history," the development of ideas) when, beginning from the era of Enlightenment, philosophers sought a rational explanation of morality, which contained norms implicitly borrowed from the Christian tradition. This led them to a situation of "conceptually incommensurable premises of the rival arguments" [17, p. 10] as they dealt with the moral concepts of past epochs without understanding their origin and cultural-historical characteristics. The main problem, however, was renunciation of the teleological nature of classical ethics. Timofey Dmitriyev has this explanation: The reason is that

> according to the conception to which all leading Enlightenment philosophers adhered in one way or another, reason is an instrument of achieving ends subjectively posited by man without being able to comprehend the true structure of spiritual and material reality [10, p. 122].

This rational limitation is embodied, according to MacIntyre, in "Hume's guillotine," which he, citing Arthur Prior, adjusts in the following way:

> [A]ny argument which moves from premises which assert that the appropriate criteria are satisfied to a conclusion which asserts that "That is a good such-and-such," where "such-and-such" picks out an item specified by a functional concept, will be a valid argument which moves from factual premises to an evaluative concept [17, p. 58].

Since in the classical tradition the concept "man" is the "central functional concept" on which all the moral judgments are based, the principle " 'man' stands for 'good man' " becomes its cornerstone [Ibid.].

According to MacIntyre, Aristotle's ethical teaching underpins classical ethics, of which Aristotle is the "central figure," just like conceptualization of human nature underpins teleologism [17, p. 120]. Classical ethics describes a method of

moving from the potentiality and indeterminateness of man in his current state to the state of human maximum realization. Dmitriyev frames the same idea succinctly: "The teleological scheme rests on the foundation of contrasting man as he is to man as he could be if he realized his substantive nature" [10, p. 111]. One has to admit that MacIntyre pinpointed the very essence of Aristotelian ethics: It is a science of how man can become completely human. Without this goal, the very question "How to be virtuous?" would be meaningless, since anyone could shrug and ask: Why be virtuous?

However, believing purely philosophical conceptualization of human nature to be impossible today, MacIntyre tries to restore the classical tradition, casting away "metaphysical biology" (because, among other things, for MacIntyre, the classical tradition is not exhausted by Aristotle, who is only a part of it [17, p. 147]). This accounts for his adoption of a substantive definition of what it means to be human, through man's performing of a range of social roles: "member of a family, citizen, soldier, philosopher, servant of God" [17, p. 59]. Apparently, he feels this to be a successful move, although it removes the concept of "human nature" from the domain of ethics. This example is the best illustration of the fact that when virtue ethics theorists invoke Aristotle, they engage in what can be called selective philosophical interpretation. Thus, MacIntyre is interested only in those aspects of Aristotle's practical knowledge that he considers to be relevant, preferring conceptualization of virtue as an effective device in elaborating ethical problems. At the same time, he does not in any way associate Aristotle's reasoning about the polis as an ideal organization of life with virtue and, against the background of Alexander of Macedon's empire-building, speaks about Aristotle having "no understanding of historicity" [17, p. 159]. Likewise, he ignores the essence of Aristotle's "functional argument" – i.e., the question of what the "work" (ἔργον, function) of man consists in. Aristotle speaks about man as he is as such – i.e., in his existential function when "an idler (ἀργός)" is not simply a do-nothing but a person who lives aimlessly. In such a determinateness of man by his being, he cannot be thought of as other than an individual, but at the same time, in Aristotle's philosophy, he remains, in MacIntyre's words, a "functional concept." This is manifested not directly in social roles, but in virtues, which also mediate social roles, being a kind of existential buffer between the individual and society – i.e., the genus represented as the concrete society that is contemporary to the individual. The principle at work here is the selfsame principle: "Man" stands for "good man" (which in Aristotle's language can be formulated as "to be man means to be virtuous"), and virtues (though not all of them) are realized, among other things, in the performance of social roles, but they are about man turning to his nature and not to society (man's sociality being only part of his nature). A virtuous man, especially one who is entirely virtuous – "morally beautiful (καλὸς κἀγαθός)" – is precisely the individual; his function (to be man) is not identical to social roles. However, discussion of the strange fact that MacIntyre overlooked this feature of Aristotle's "metaphysical biology" is beyond the scope of this paper. What is important for our purposes is that he explicated the methodological attitude that informs Aristotelian ethics: The rightness of an act follows from man's functional determinateness.

While MacIntyre focuses on anthropology, Nussbaum (perhaps the most notable representative of virtue ethics), at the start of her analysis of Aristotle's ethics, singles out the epistemological component: Theoretical knowledge "is not always … directly connected to practical questions," but it establishes "a necessary foundation" for solving them [21, pp. 237, 238]. For her, the epistemological aspect is key in anthropology as well – that is, in that man's actualization of his nature is a conscious but not fully rationalizable process, and rationality is his necessary feature but not an exclusive one. She singles out the concept of "desire (ὄρεξις)" as a key to comprehending Aristotelian ethics [21, pp. 273-282]. Although, again, Hegel was the first to mark this feature: "Reason is not … the principle of virtue purely in itself, for it is rather the rational impulse towards what is good; both desire and reason are thus necessary moments in virtue" [16, pp. 204-205].

Nussbaum stresses the uniqueness of every act, which stems from many factors, including the individual's freedom. People are not determined completely by their history or biology; they have the capabilities of imagination and reflection that liberate them from total determination. Every act is a result of such a multitude of factors, including personal traits, love, and all manner of "uncontrolled happenings," that its understanding defies any universalization [20, p. 64]. That is the main thrust of Nussbaum's opposition to normative ethics, which presents absolute and universal norms, ignoring all these nuances. But there is no relativism here. Although every norm is in some sense "empty" [20, p. 93], our perception of the concrete situation of an act is a kind of "conversation between … general conceptions and unique cases." Nussbaum resorts to a metaphor: "[T]he general is dark, uncommunicative, if it is not realized in a concrete image; but a concrete image or description would be inarticulate, in fact mad, if it contained no general terms" [20, p. 95]. "Progress (personal/moral development – *R. P.*) comes not from the teaching of an abstract law but from leading the friend, or child, or loved one – by a word, by a story, by an image – to see some new aspect of the concrete case" [19, p. 160].

That is why, considering the complexity and diversity of life, novels and biography, in Nussbaum's opinion, do more for moral development than philosophical tracts, "texts that narrate the experiences of beings committed to value" [19, p. 149]: Novels also "speak to us" [20, p. 95]. Nussbaum creates an image of communication (both internal – i.e., auto-communication – and, more broadly, interaction with the surrounding world) that expresses inner development: A person is in constant conversation with oneself and the world/ life, articulating oneself, clarifying oneself, and ultimately finding oneself in harmonious unity. However, conceptually, she does not introduce communication into ethics in general and into Aristotelian ethics in particular, concentrating on the concept of "happiness (εὐδαιμονία)." It distills "the ambition of human reason to subdue and master τύχη through the arts or sciences" and at the same time explains "what it means to be a human animal, a being who attempts to control nature, but who is also influenced and acted on by nature" [21, pp. 237, 238]. Considering that "τύχη" means fortune, vicissitude as opposed to "ἀνάνκη" (necessity, predetermination), "mastering fortune" is the practice of opposing

chance, taking advantage of it, being in harmony with one's nature in every case. This is the subject of Nussbaum's most popular book *The Fragility of Goodness*. "Goodness," she explains parenthetically, should be understood as happiness, or eudaimonia [21, p. i]. The distinguishing feature of happiness is that it is achieved through a virtuous act; moreover, happiness consists in such an act and is realized in it. Through a virtuous act, man gains the only kind of stability accessible to him in a world of constant changes. Chance (τύχη) may stand in the way of happiness (a vivid example is the fate of Priam mentioned by Aristotle), but even if chance may to some extent impede the realization of virtue, chance cannot fully control a person who is virtuous [21, p. 418], and the person develops in a morally stable way through "good human functioning" [21, p. 95]. Nussbaum sees a way out to such functioning, among other things, in communication. Drawing attention to Aristotle's words "that the irrational element is in some sense persuaded by a rational principle is indicated … by the giving of advice and by all reproof and exhortation" (Arist. Eth. Nic. 1102b30-1103a; [4]), she points out that even in the case of a child, habituation cannot be interpreted as "behavioral manipulation," that "praise and blame are from the beginning not just pushes, but appropriate modes of communication to an intelligent creature" [21, p. 286].

As for the consideration of Aristotle's ethics specifically through the problematic of communication, it can be noted that communication in an ethical context has been little studied in his philosophy. Such works as *The Problem of the Other in Aristotle's Philosophy*, by Ruben Apressyan,* which examines inter-personal communication, are few and far between [3]. Although the three main concepts related to communication in Aristotle are κοινωνία, ὁμιλία, and φιλία, the literature in and outside Russia mainly refers to κοινωνία, and even then only indirectly, through family and the state; thus, the analysis was carried out only in the context of a separate political doctrine of Aristotle [18, pp. 24-50; 24; 13, pp. 175-199]. This being the standard approach in the framework of the study of *Politics*, one might as well cite all the literature on *Politics*. The only Russian-language article, which treats communication as a general concept is, unfortunately, in the form of a review [1].

While it is probably not quite fair to expect ethical explications from research on *Politics*, and the problem of communication has receded into the background in virtue ethics, remaining little more than Nussbaum's intuition, one might expect the ethics of discourse (communicative ethics) to pay attention to Aristotle's conceptualization of communication as a key factor of moral development and the determination of human nature. However, the chief architect of this trend, Jürgen Habermas, does not even mention Aristotle in his main work *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, despite the similarities between communicative ethics and Aristotle's ethics – for example, (1) the similarity of interpersonal communication with "communicative interactions," where agreement is "measured by the intersubjective recognition of claims to validity ... in three ways," in terms of the "objective world," "social world," and "subjective world" [15, p. 58], or (2) the similarity of some aspects of polis communication with the "complete internalization of … abstract and universal principles"

that form "postconventional superego structures" [15, p. 183]. However, these similarities, like any other possible thematic and conceptual resemblances, can be perceived as promising the success of a future comparative study both of a strictly historical-philosophical trend and as being directed toward contemporary ethical problems, in which case Aristotle is becoming increasingly relevant – especially since Habermas very much likes one of Aristotle's definitions of man that he believes to be a much more profound expression of human nature than MacIntyre's set of social roles. I am referring to the famous phrase "man is a political creature" (πολιτικὸν ὁ ἄνθρωπος ζῷον / man is a political animal)" (Arist. Eth. Nic. 1169b15-20; see [4]). Habermas offers this explication:

> It is not forms of social existence as such that set human beings apart from other species. To grasp what is special about the social nature of humans, we need to translate Aristotle's famous characterization of man as a *zoon politikón* quite literally: man is a political animal, that is, an animal that exists *in a public space*. To be more precise, human beings are animals that, by virtue of being embedded from the outset in public networks of social relationships, first develop the competences that make them into persons.

The last phrase (literally – "*die ihn zur Person machen*") obviously resonates with the "functional argument" [14, p. 13].

Considering that publicity (*Öffentlichkeit*), according to Habermas, is "a space of reasoned communicative exchanges (*Umgang*)" [14, p. 12], the adjective "political" expresses the human quality of being made/formed through reasoned interpersonal "communicative exchanges." It may be added that in German translations of Aristotle's texts, the word *Umgang* is used to translate "ὁμιλία" as interpersonal communication. Needless to say, although in general the word "exchange" matches "ὁμιλία" as well (examples of such a translation occur in *Politics*), any conceptual parallels need to be substantiated. In the case of "exchanges with the Other (*Umgangs mit Anderen*)," it is not quite clear with whom communicative exchanges take place. Is it the Other? Unfortunately, Habermas does not consider this question in relation to Aristotle's philosophy. When, along with interpersonal communications, we refer also to polis communication, we thereby recognize the special status of this Other by calling it "polis." Polis is the space (historical, cultural) representing the existence of man as genus. The term "political animal" points to the individual's embeddedness in the development of the genus, making his nature, "metaphysical biology" clear and very real, and not at all speculative. However, neither communicative ethics nor virtue ethics availed themselves of this conceptual move for the philosophical, ethical definition of human nature.

One of the last works that deserves mention is Michael Winter's *Rethinking Virtue Ethics*. In it, radicalizing the attitude of MacIntyre (while, strangely, never citing him) and his bid to abolish "Hume's guillotine," he elaborates the project of Aristotle's deductive ethics (although in this case, "Aristotelian ethics" should be "put in brackets," as Martin Heidegger did). In his opinion, "from more general principles about human beings, their dispositions and features of their actions" may be derived "action-guiding moral principles," thereby creating a "deductive

framework" in ethics [25, pp. 42, 43]. Basically, he speaks about defining the boundaries of a virtuous act, which is precisely what Aristotle is speaking about. Granted, Winter's deductive move is impossible for Aristotle by definition. Winter also tries to show the interconnection of virtue and knowledge in opposition to "virtues of ignorance," etc. (For example, can modesty be called a virtue if it is merely a psychological trait like shyness?) This, in turn, is important in creating an "ideal ethical theory" that

> would offer enough flexibility to account for the complexities and contingencies of the moral life, but would contain enough stability to allow for the objectivity of moral judgments [25, p. 1].

In this case, Robert Audi, another representative of virtue ethics, follows a more rational path by elaborating the definition of virtue:

> a virtue is a feature of character that has a significant tendency to influence conduct and supplies its possessor with normative reason indicating what sort of thing should be done in a wide range of contexts and with motivation to do such things for an appropriate kind of reason [7, pp. 82-83].

Then the inner (intellectual-moral) state of the agent, his "cognitive and motivational elements," become key, hence "the standard of conduct" may be ideal, oriented toward a "role model," but "need not come from a rule or principle." Audi also stresses the difference of the nature of such motivation from the internalization of moral principles, without which virtue ethics becomes essentially deontological.

Such thought moves show that virtue ethics has not accomplished the key theoretical task – i.e., has failed to create and introduce into moral philosophy a holistic concept of human nature. Even such extended interpretations as those offered by Nussbaum and Winter do not go beyond an analysis of specific themes (virtue, happiness). Winter even attempts to reduce Aristotle's teleologism to Charles Darwin's teaching [25, pp. 32-38]. MacIntyre points to the functional significance of conceptualizing human nature, but he sees it exclusively as a set of social roles, thus making virtue ethics vulnerable to the critique of sociologists, such as John Doris, with whom Winter takes issue [25, pp. 13-19]. Thus it turns out that it is also impossible to give a clear answer to the question "what is virtue?" in essence, in expressing human activity, which means that it becomes an abstraction as vague as duty and universal good. Aristotle answers this question through a complex set of concepts (work, end, habit, disposition, conscious choice, judgment, the soul's eye, happiness), which, according to him, have not only anthropological but also ontological and epistemological connotations. Thus, it is impossible to interpret conscious choice without the concept of thought, and end and happiness without hylomorphism. However, virtue ethics has practically done nothing to give a fundamental account of the concept of virtue. As a result, it has nothing with which to counter such critics as Stephen Buckle, who claims that "there is no separate alternative to deontology or consequentialism called 'virtue ethics':

There is, rather, the theory of moral right supporting issues of moral psychology and moral education" [8, p. 566]. Not surprisingly, the anthropological turn was to a large extent obscured by debates about distinguishing conceptual trends in moral philosophy. As a result, on the one hand, virtue ethics has experienced pressure from the modern (scientist) picture of the world, not daring, as it were, to come to grips with the topic of human nature, leaving it to other disciplines (sociology, psychology, neurophysiology, etc.), and on the other hand, it has failed to follow through on the possible solutions at which it arrived (explaining the development of man through communications); although, the discursive field of virtue ethics has drawn much closer to communicative ethics. This suggests that the anthropological turn in moral philosophy can be credited with bringing about a merger of these two trends, each of which separately have their limitations both in conceptualizing the phenomenon of morality and in the explication of the moral ground of human activity.

Without going into a critique of virtue ethics, let us just say that it is all rooted in the problems and complexities that Aristotle himself saw, wrote about, and tried to solve. The way representatives of virtue ethics invoked Aristotle's philosophy shows that the re-emergence of former concepts brings back old problems, which turned out to be stumbling blocks to the development of the new area of research. One reason was that the essentially philosophical reinterpretation of Aristotle's ideas was strictly theoretical, without proper historical-philosophical reconstruction as a holistic and coherent philosophical system, which sometimes takes outlandish forms (for example, Winter supports the claim of Timothy Roche to the effect that Aristotle's method of building ethical knowledge is dialectical [23], all merely to fend off critics of his interpretation). As a result, the concepts of Aristotelian ethics were perceived as antique precursors of progressive virtue ethics and were plucked out of context. However, because the anthropological turn is based on Aristotle's ideas, it cannot be successfully completed without a thorough understanding of his ethics, and its future hinges on grasping the inner logic of Aristotelian "practical knowledge," the description of his moral teaching as a full-fledged system and not analysis of separate problems. A strong case needs to be made for returning the concept of "human nature" to ethics, which can be done by the conceptualization of morality (and virtue as one of its parameters) through communication when man is seen as self-realizing and acquiring himself through communication with the other and with himself. If we turn to Aristotle's philosophy for help, it is necessary first to reconstruct the link in his philosophy between theoretical knowledge (which also includes conceptualization of man) and practical knowledge – i.e., how to act rightly. It is only then that it makes sense to regard the concepts of "moral disposition" and "virtue" as complementing the rationality of moral choice. It is also necessary to reconstruct the structure of communication (its principles, types, and forms) in Aristotle's descriptions. Strange as it may sound, such a massive research project has never been attempted. The likely reason is that it could not have grown out of the logic of the historical-philosophical approach, while moral philosophy has not yet realized that it is necessary.

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Note

* Ruben Apressyan was recognized as a foreign agent by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation.

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