Gratitude, Virtue, and Moral Lapses

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Long ago I argued that gratitude is both a duty and a moral virtue.[1] A person can fail with respect to gratitude, I claimed, by not performing suitable actions in appropriate circumstances, by not developing appropriate attitudes and dispositions, or by performing a right act but for a wrong reason or doing so only grudgingly. Some critics of my view argued that gratitude is a virtue but not a duty.[2] The criticism seems to presuppose that any failure with respect to gratitude is a failure to cultivate fully the relevant virtue. Against this, I will argue that someone who has cultivated the virtue of gratitude can still fail to act on a suitable occasion. I will describe several failures to act that a virtuous agent may display, and then address the more difficult question of whether any of these moral lapses demonstrate culpability. If my arguments are plausible, they will apply to other so-called action virtues.

I. The Argument that Gratitude is not a Duty

Christopher Wellman has argued most forcefully that gratitude is a virtue but not a duty, so I begin with his account. He presents a case of two women, Marge and Selma, who are members of an organization of antique lovers. They have developed a relationship based on this mutual interest. One day Selma stumbles across an old clock that she knows Marge would prize. She buys it for Marge, and refuses reimbursement. Some time later, while shopping Marge sees a quilt that she knows would complement Selma's collection. She considers buying it for Selma, but she decides not to do so; she knows that Selma will not find out that she had come across this item. Most of us are critical of Marge because we think that she is ungrateful. Wellman is too. As he says, "Certainly an ungrateful person can be morally deficient, but it is a

mistake to say that one can be obligated to engage in behavior that expresses gratitude."[3] Instead, Marge's shortcoming is that she has not developed the virtue of gratitude. Our condemnation "is not because Marge has failed to do her duty; rather, it is because her behavior reveals her to be a horribly self-centered person."[4] Marge is self-centered and does lack the relevant virtue. But it does not follow that she has no duty.

There are basically two parts to Wellman's argument. One is that the proper negative assessment of Marge (and anyone else who fails regarding gratitude) is a judgment about her character. The other part of the argument is that gratitude is not properly understood as a duty because various features essential to duties do not apply to gratitude. The two parts of the argument come together in certain ways, but I shall begin with the latter part. One reason that Wellman gives for holding that gratitude is outside the realm of duties concerns the role of third parties.[5] He argues that it is "typically supposed that third parties may justifiably interfere when one fails to do one's duty," but third parties have no business interfering with Marge's ungrateful conduct. Related to this, it is often appropriate to use the law to enforce duties; but it is clearly inappropriate to use the law to enforce debts of gratitude. A second reason that gratitude falls outside the realm of duty concerns the place of individuals to whom the alleged duty is owed. Wellman cites Claudia Card approvingly when she writes, "The benefactor does not have a *right* to one's acting in accord with … (the responsibilities of gratitude) but only *deserves* it."[6] If the original benefactor demands repayment from the beneficiary, something does seem amiss. I have argued elsewhere that the problem is that the original gift was not granted freely, but rather had strings attached; thus, one of the conditions necessary for creating a duty of gratitude is absent.[7] Wellman recognizes, of course, that some duties do not

have correlative rights, such as duties of beneficence.[8] But this will not help those who wish to maintain that gratitude is a duty. Duties of beneficence are what Wellman calls "freestanding duties"; the agent has discretion regarding whom she will benefit. But gratitude "is quite unlike beneficence" because gratitude is owed to a specific individual, the benefactor.

In my judgment, none of these three reasons shows that gratitude is not properly understood as a duty. Consider first the role of third parties. It is not true that third parties may always appropriately interfere when a duty is breached. If I promise to meet a newspaper reporter for an interview concerning a story about which I have some expertise, my failure to keep the promise is a violation of a duty; but no third party is warranted in interfering. In a footnote, Wellman concedes this,[9] but he claims that with such duties as keeping one's promises it is <u>frequently</u> appropriate to enforce the obligations, but "it is always inappropriate to exact debts of gratitude." But I would counter that there are some clear duties (other than gratitude) that it is never appropriate for third parties to enforce. Duties of friendship provide one example. Friendship is a one-on-one relationship that is not the business of others; yet there are clearly many moral requirements associated with friendship. There are things that I can do to a friend that others are justified in interfering with, such as assault; but when this is the case the relevant duty that I am violating is grounded in something other than friendship.[10] The duty to provide emotional support in times of crises is, I would argue, a real duty grounded in friendship and not appropriately enforced by others.

Wellman himself, of course, provides an answer to his second reason for not regarding gratitude as a duty. Even if it is true that the original beneficiary has no right against the benefactor, not all duties have correlative rights. (As we have seen, Wellman counters this by

pointing out how gratitude differs from beneficence.) But there is another point to be made here. While I agree that the benefactor (in the case of gratitude) has no right to demand a return from the beneficiary, under some conditions she does have a right to criticize the beneficiary for failing to act. Suppose that Sue sees a casual acquaintance, Joe, stranded along the roadside because his automobile is disabled. She stops and gives him a ride to the nearest service station. Several months later, Joe sees Sue stranded. They make eye contact. Joe does not stop to help Sue, not because some other duty is more pressing, but because he just does not want to bother. Sue is within her rights, I think, to criticize Joe for failing to help her; and the most plausible reason to think that Joe had a duty to help is to appeal to the norm of gratitude.

Because duties of beneficence have no correlative rights, Wellman seemed to have opened the door for those of us who hold that gratitude is a duty. But he tries to close that door with his third argument. So-called duties of gratitude are importantly different from duties of beneficence. If there are duties of beneficence, the bearers of those duties have the discretion to choose whom to benefit; but gratitude is owed to a particular individual, one's prior benefactor. There are two things to say in response to this. Usually duties of beneficence give agents the discretion to choose whom to benefit and when; but that is not always the case. If I can easily save someone's life – say, by tossing a preserver to a drowning swimmer – that is a duty of beneficence that allows me no discretion. The other thing to say here is that duties of gratitude sometimes have discretion associated with them. To whom the duty is owed is not a matter of discretion; the duty is owed to the prior benefactor. But <u>what</u> is owed and <u>when</u> it must be given are matters that sometimes afford the bearer of the duty flexibility. Admittedly,

if the occasion for helping the prior benefactor is perfect – as is the case of Sue and Joe described above – then this discretion is lacking. But, as we have seen, the same is true of beneficence. More often than not, however, when and how to discharge a debt of gratitude is not that clearly defined.

Finally, in some cases the appropriate reaction of third parties to a person who has failed regarding gratitude is exactly like the reaction they have to other cases where duties have been ignored or violated. Consider the case of Sara and Jim. They are walking through a city and see a person get hit by an automobile. The victim is suffering greatly, but Jim exhibits no concern at all. Sara criticizes him for his lack of compassion. This rebuke is properly understood as a criticism of Jim's character; he has not developed the virtue of compassion. But now imagine that a third party observes Joe declining to assist Sue (the case above) and is aware of the relevant history. In that case the third party is apt to say to Joe, "You owed it to Sue to give her assistance." The language of "owing" is natural here and fits comfortably with our talk about duties.

II. The Argument that Failures of Gratitude are Character Flaws

Shifting gears, I maintain that in certain circumstances our negative judgment of a person's failure to help a prior benefactor makes sense only if we hold that the person had a duty of gratitude to help in those circumstances. Wellman agrees that in some circumstances failure to act is a moral shortcoming with respect to gratitude; but, according to him, the problem is not failure to discharge a duty. This leads him to distinguish between two types of moral reasons: duty-imposing reasons and virtue-making reasons.[11] Duty-imposing reasons apply if an agent has a duty to do X; "whereas if one ought to do X as a virtue, then one has

what we might call 'virtue-making' reasons to do X." Virtue-making reasons are said to be "ought to be" as much as "ought to do" because "the focus is upon the agent's character rather than merely her actions" and so "the judgment principally concerns how a morally ideal person would be." So Wellman and I agree that not helping a prior benefactor in certain situations is a failure of gratitude. But Wellman insists that the agent has not failed to do her duty; instead, our criticism of her suggests that "a morally ideal person would be naturally inclined to respond to her benefactor with similar goodwill."[12] Virtue-reasons are ones which, if acted on, will presumably bring one closer to being a morally ideal person.

So, according to Wellman, any failure with respect to gratitude is not a failure to perform a duty because "it is frequently permissible (and sometimes required) for a third party to interfere and try to force the agent to perform her duty;" but use of such force is not appropriate when it comes to gratitude. Moreover, duties have certain features: "there is a specific action required, often a second party has a correlative claim-right to its performance, and thus it is understandable that another may often permissibly interfere."[13] As noted earlier, Wellman admitted that duties of beneficence lack these features; but since beneficence is not normally owed to a specific individual and gratitude is, gratitude cannot be like beneficence. This assumes that if a duty has features that deviate from the paradigm sketched out by Wellman, then any other duty that deviates from the paradigm has to have all of these same features. But why assume that? Moreover, as I said, duties of friendship lack most of the features Wellman highlights. One response here is to deny that there are duties of friendship; all moral requirements associated with friendship are connected to virtue. I see no reason to accept this (other than the desire to hold tenaciously to the paradigm). But let us consider

another example. I assert that there are duties to respect other persons. There are many ways that one can fail to respect another, and some of these (such as assault) are encompassed by additional moral principles. But think of mundane ways that one can fail to respect another, such as harsh gestures, condescending facial expressions, and mean words. Such actions probably do show significant things about the agent's character; but such an agent has also violated the duty to treat others with respect; it is not merely that someone with an ideal character would do so. The use of force by third parties in these cases is not typically warranted and probably would not be effective; but moral criticism is appropriate, just as it is too in failures of gratitude or neglect of a friend. Moreover, the kind of moral criticism that is appropriate signals that duties are involved. Notice that when someone breaks a promise, he has not given the second party that which he owes her. The same is true when an agent lies to another or commits an assault. Often failure to do one's duty is a failure to give another that which she is owed. And clearly this idiom applies in cases of friendship, respect, and gratitude. Respect is owed to all, gratitude is owed to certain prior benefactors, and friends are owed various kinds of special treatment.

The core difference between Wellman and me gets at some important points about virtue and character. In explaining our disagreement, Wellman writes, "According to McConnell, there must be duties of gratitude because if Smith feels grateful to Jones and yet does not stop to help Jones when the latter is in need, we still criticize Smith." Smith has the appropriate feelings, so she has failed to perform a duty. Wellman retorts, "My own interpretation of this thought experiment is that we criticize Smith because her failure to assist Jones reveals that she is not sufficiently grateful, and thus our criticism remains focused on

Smith's feelings."[14] So Wellman and I agree that there is an action component connected with the norm of gratitude. But Wellman is committed to the strong thesis that if an agent fails to act on gratitude in appropriate circumstances, then that agent's character is flawed and the virtue of gratitude is insufficiently developed. In what remains, I will argue that this thesis is overstated and does not do justice to many kinds of cases.

III. When the Virtuous Fail to Act

It is clear that a person can possess virtue V, be in circumstances in which individuals who possess that trait would characteristically act in a certain way, yet not perform that act in these circumstances. Suppose, for example, that the person is paralyzed. As Liz Gulliford, Blaire Morgan, and Kristjan Kristjannson say, "A person paralyzed and incapable of direct action or expression can nonetheless possess the virtue of compassion if the relevant emotion (pain at another's undeserved bad fortune) is stably and consistently in place, along with a desire to help."[15] And, as they note, this can apply to gratitude: "The same would presumably go for gratitude as a potential virtue, or a virtue ethical understanding: Person P could be considered grateful – fully and unreservedly – although P had, for some reason, no ability or opportunity to express the emotion in action."[16] Wellman, of course, could readily accept this claim. The individual's failure to act in this case is not a moral failure; 'ought' implies 'can' presumably applies not only to duty-making reasons, but to virtue-making reasons as well. But there are other cases, I think, where mere failure to act is not sufficient to warrant concluding that the relevant virtue is not adequately developed.

In Chapter 2 of *On Virtue Ethics*,[17] Rosalind Hursthouse discusses what she calls "resolvable dilemmas." In these cases, two different virtues pull the agent in different

directions. In Wellman's terms, an agent has virtue-making reasons to do each of two acts but cannot do both; even assuming that there is a morally preferable alternative here, the agent will fail to act on one virtue-making reason. Hursthouse calls these norms that can conflict "v-rules," rules that are associated with the various virtues. On her very reasonable view, virtue ethics can provide action guidance to agents. She suggests, "An action is right iff it is what a virtuous agent would, characteristically, do in the circumstances."[18] If an agent is facing a resolvable dilemma, then her circumstances are such that there are two different actions that a virtuous agent would characteristically do, doing both in these circumstances is not possible, and the virtuous agent has reason to prefer one over the other. But the alternative not taken by this agent is one that a virtuous person would, in ordinary circumstances, act on. So here is a case where an agent will fail to act on an applicable v-rule but that is not evidence that the agent lacks the correlative virtue. Indeed, Hursthouse makes a stronger claim: there is evidence that the agent does possess the pertinent virtue. This is because virtuous agents who have faced resolvable dilemmas will experience what is sometimes called "moral remainders" or "moral residue." Even after having acted on what is, by hypothesis, the better choice in the situation, the agent will have experienced hesitation, will experience regret, will want to make amends, and the like.[19] These moral emotions occur precisely because the agent possesses the relevant virtue; these reactions show that the agent cares about the right things.

Applying this specifically to gratitude is straightforward. Suppose that an agent encounters a situation in which two people, P_1 and P_2, each is in need of assistance, but the agent can help only one. One of these people, P_1, is someone to whom the agent owes gratitude. But P_2 is in much greater danger and is apt to experience irreversible harm unless

the agent helps her. In such a case, the agent ought to help P_2, even though ordinarily one should give priority to those to whom one owes gratitude. Afterwards, the agent has additional requirements, including explaining to P_1 why he acted as he did.[20] These additional requirements are based on the agent's entire moral outlook, including a commitment to gratitude. Notice that this would be the same even if the agent owed gratitude to both P_1 and P_2. The obligation to help P_2 would be morally overdetermined, rooted in both beneficence and gratitude. But the agent's subsequent actions toward P_1 will show his recognition of the gratitude that he still owes her.

Wellman may concede my point here and say that it has no bearing on his thesis. That is because his thesis is that "the terminology of duties cannot accurately capture our moral condemnation of those we find *culpably* ungrateful."[21] In the cases I have described above, we do not condemn the agent nor do we find him culpable. Nevertheless, the cases do show that an agent can possess the virtue of gratitude, be in a situation where that ordinarily calls for a certain action, fail to perform that action, yet we have no reason to doubt that he possesses the virtue. Indeed, per Hursthouse, his reactions give us affirmative evidence that he does possess the virtue.

In Chapter 3 of *On Virtue Ethics*, Hursthouse discusses what she calls "tragic dilemmas." In tragic dilemmas, each of the available choices is terrible. The circumstances may be such that there are two different actions that a virtuous agent would characteristically do, doing both in these circumstances is not possible, and omitting either act would be horrible. Or, there are two different actions each of which a virtuous agent would deem terrible to do, but in the circumstances she must do one of them. In these cases, it seems that the virtuous agent

must act badly and cannot emerge with her life unmarred.[22] If there are tragic dilemmas,[23] then it seems that agents facing them will necessarily fail to exhibit a virtue, or, worse, display a vice. Hursthouse cites a well-known case from the writings of Bernard Williams to illustrate this.[24] In a South American village, Jim comes upon a military captain who is preparing to kill twenty prisoners. But the captain suddenly makes Jim an offer: if Jim kills one (any one) of the twenty, the rest will be saved; but if Jim refuses, all twenty will be killed. It seems that whatever Jim does, he must act badly; he cannot emerge from this unmarred. But, assuming that the tragic dilemma occurred through no fault of the agent (as was the case for Jim), it does not seem that such situations show that the agent lacked the relevant virtue or possessed the correlative vice. As Hursthouse puts it, "But who would ascribe to someone the whole character trait of a particular vice simply because she was faced with a tragic dilemma and acted? Doing what is, say, dishonest solely in the context of a tragic dilemma does not entail being dishonest, possessing that vice; it does not even provide any evidence for it."[25] Indeed, as Hursthouse claims, the virtuous agent will act "with immense regret and pain instead of indifferently," thereby providing evidence that she is not callous or dishonest or unjust.[26] So here is another case where failure to act in a situation where a virtue is applicable does not show that the agent lacks the virtue or that the virtue is insufficiently developed.

Applying this specifically to gratitude is not as straightforward as was the case with resolvable dilemmas. This is because it is a bit more difficult to think of examples of putatively tragic dilemmas where gratitude is one of the conflicting norms. And in part this is because gratitude is a narrow imperfect duty, and in cases of conflict imperfect duties typically are overridden by perfect duties.[27] But consider this (somewhat fanciful) case. An agent

encounters a situation in which each of two people, P_1 and P_2, is in dire need of assistance; without immediate help, each will likely die. The agent can help each, but not both. As it turns out, both P_1 and P_2 had previously provided the agent with a significant benefit and under conditions that generate a debt of gratitude. Given that the magnitude of each benefit was roughly equal, there is no meaningful sense in which our agent owes more to either P_1 or P_2. No matter what our agent does, save P_1 or save P_2, the following will be true: someone will have perished, that person will be someone to whom our agent owes a significant debt of gratitude, and the agent could have saved that individual. There is something tragic about this situation, even if it is not an irresolvable dilemma. But surely what Hursthouse stated generically applies here. This does not show that the agent was ungrateful, nor does it show that gratitude was insufficiently developed in the agent. The agent's after-the-fact reaction – intense regret, guilt, or the like – may indeed suggest that gratitude was an important part of her character.

Again, Wellman may grant this but say that it does not touch his argument because the agent is not culpable. And the discussion above conceded (for the sake of argument) that there can be tragic dilemmas that arise through no fault of the agent. Still, we have another type of case where failure to act is not evidence that the would-be agent lacks the relevant virtue.

IV. Culpable Lapses

Let us now turn to somewhat more mundane cases where someone fails to act on a virtue-making reason. In some of these cases, the agent may be like Marge, someone in whom the virtue is lacking or is badly underdeveloped. Recall that Marge was aware that Selma would like the quilt, aware that Selma had been generous to her in the past, but decided not to buy

the quilt for Selma, in part because she knew that nobody else would know about this. Wellman correctly says that "Marge's blatantly ungrateful behavior demonstrates a serious character flaw;"[28] Marge is ungrateful and possesses the vice of ingratitude. But, as I shall argue, in some cases the agent may have the relevant virtue highly cultivated but fail to act on it. Someone who is "not grateful" in a particular situation (that is, does not act as a grateful person would characteristically act) is not necessarily someone who is "ungrateful." The case of Marge is but one among many.

Again, Hursthouse is helpful. As she indicates, there are "everyday ways in which virtuous people act 'out of character' – when they are exhausted, dazed with grief, ill, drunk (through no serious fault of their own, we must suppose), shell-shocked, and so on."[29] These are cases that I shall call "moral lapses." In many of these cases, the agent is not culpable. One who is "dazed with grief" and fails to exhibit gratitude in a situation that calls for it is surely not culpable. So too one who is properly described as "shell-shocked" is likely not to be culpable for his omissions. But there are other cases. Consider the case of Maria and Sharon. Their relationship and histories are like that of Marge and Selma. Sharon has recently provided Maria with a thoughtful gift, and now Maria, while shopping, notices an item that she knows Sharon would especially like. Maria decides to buy the item for Sharon. But she encounters another acquaintance, Tom, and strikes up a lively conversation with him. After this lively exchange, Maria proceeds to the check-out counter and leaves the store. Having been distracted, she forgot to buy the item for Sharon. Distraction is an ordinary phenomenon that happens to many of us. But if the relationship between Maria and Sharon is like the relationship between Marge and Selma (as I am supposing), and if the item that Maria noticed would have been an

especially appropriate demonstration of her gratitude to Sharon, then I would argue that Maria ought to have bought the gift for Sharon. Wellman would say that the 'ought' here is a virtue-making reason, not a duty. But there is no reason to assume that Maria's character is flawed with respect to gratitude. This is just one of the "everyday ways" in which a virtuous person might act out of character.

In my case of Maria and Sharon, I am suggesting that Maria's distraction is an explanation of her omission. Maria's friends know her as a generous and grateful person. They would never expect her to decline to buy the item in question for Sharon, given the situation, unless this omission could be plausibly explained. And the explanation is needed precisely because Maria is a grateful person, someone in whom gratitude is properly cultivated. Maria's distraction is not an excuse, however. If this item would be an especially appropriate return for Maria to make to Sharon, then she has a duty to do so in this case.[30] That she was distracted is no excuse for her omission. Maria is culpable, but she is not culpable for her character (with respect to gratitude). It is not quite correct to say that Maria forgot the difference between right and wrong.[31] Maria believed that she ought to buy the item for Sharon, and the basis for her belief is her understanding of gratitude. But Maria was distracted before carrying out her duty.

I am not claiming here that the distracted agent is always culpable; but culpability is plausibly assigned to Maria in this case. Nor am I claiming that distracted agents are equally culpable. Imagine that a father has his two-year-old child secured in the back seat of his automobile. It is a very hot day. He drives to a nearby store, locks his car, and goes shopping for several hours. His two-year-old suffers from heat stroke. Distraction is not as

understandable in this case as it is in Maria's case. This is not an everyday way in which a virtuous person acts out of character. The father is not only more blameworthy for his omission than is Maria, but this provides evidence of a serious character flaw (in the absence of additional information). This case of the negligent father is like Wellman's case of Marge and Selma; inferences about the agent's character are warranted (unless there is other relevant information). But the case of Maria and Sharon is as ordinary and believable as the case of Marge and Selma, and Maria's fault is not attributable to her character. Maria experienced a moral lapse, and this lapse is not due to a failure to be grateful.

It seems that if Maria's failure is to be understood in terms of insufficiently cultivated virtue (as Wellman must maintain), then one can be properly called virtuous only if one never fails. Aristotle distinguishes among incontinence, continence, and full virtue.[32] Both the incontinent and continent persons have correct opinions about what is right. Both also have desires that sometimes tempt them to act contrary to their moral opinions. While the incontinent person sometimes gives in to these conflicting desires, the continent person does not. The fully virtuous person does not experience these conflicting desires.[33] But we need not hold that the fully virtuous person is perfect. Perfection may be precluded if the virtues are in tension with each other.[34] But apart from this point, demanding perfection of an agent before labeling her 'virtuous' is an inapt use of that expression; one can properly be called virtuous by being virtuous enough.[35] The cost of holding that a fully virtuous person is perfect is, presumably, that the term 'fully virtuous' applies to no human agents.

In Aristotle's system, *phronesis* or practical wisdom is an intellectual virtue that enables agents to deliberate well about moral values and how to live.[36] Perhaps Wellman's thesis that

all failures of gratitude are due to a lack of virtue can be salvaged if the agent who is ungrateful (or merely not grateful) has a failure of practical wisdom. But this claim seems implausible. First, note that in the case of Marge and Selma, there is no reason to think that a failure of practical wisdom alone leads Marge astray. Second, in the case of Maria and Sharon, Maria's moral lapse is one of distraction. I do not see why that must be explained as a defect in practical wisdom. And third, even if all moral lapses can be explained as involving a failure of practical wisdom, that does not mean that the person who on a particular occasion is not grateful (though not ungrateful) needs to work more on cultivating the virtue of gratitude. Such a person can have a lapse, I have argued, even if she has cultivated the virtue of gratitude as well as any other person. These same considerations, I think, can apply to other virtues, such as honesty, kindness, compassion, tactfulness, and the like.

V. Conclusion

To show that gratitude is a virtue but not a duty, the critic must execute two distinct lines of argument. First, he must show that all failures with respect to gratitude are in some way character flaws. If the critic concedes, as Wellman does, that not acting in certain cases (pertaining to gratitude) is a moral failure, then he must trace that failure to the agent's bad or insufficiently developed moral character. But ordinary, everyday cases like that of Maria and Sharon suggest that this account is too simplistic. Second, even if it were true that all failures with respect to gratitude indicated a problem with the agent's character, that alone does not preclude that the agent has a duty, based on gratitude, to act. So the critic must argue that our (conceptual) understanding of duties is in some way in conflict with how we view gratitude. Wellman argues that third parties typically may enforce duties, but no one may force another to display gratitude. But, I countered, duties of friendship are real duties that others may not enforce. Wellman also argues that duties typically have correlative rights, but in the case of

gratitude a benefactor may not make a claim against his beneficiary. But duties of beneficence have no correlative rights attached to them, as Wellman acknowledges. His third conceptual claim is that duties that lack correlative rights (such as beneficence) allow the agent to choose whom to benefit; but gratitude is targeted because the beneficiary must aid his prior benefactor. Against this, I claim that duties of beneficence do not always allow for discretion; and in any case this is a feature that seems accidental, not essential.

ENDNOTES

[1] Terrance McConnell, *Gratitude* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), especially Chapters I and II.
[2] Christopher Heath Wellman, "Gratitude as a Virtue," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 80 (1999), pp. 284-300.
[3] Wellman, p. 285.
[4] Wellman, p. 285.
[5] Wellman, pp. 288-289.
[6] Claudia Card, "Gratitude and Obligation," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 25 (1988), p. 120.
[7] McConnell, pp. 23-25.
[8] Wellman, pp. 289-290.
[9] Wellman, note 10, p. 299.
[10] Of course, many obligations are morally overdetermined.
[11] Wellman, pp. 292-293.
[12] Wellman, p. 292.
[13] Wellman, pp. 292-293.
[14] Wellman, pp. 295-296.
[15] Liz Gulliford, Blaire Morgan, and Kristjan Kristjannson, "Recent Work on the Concept of Gratitude in Philosophy and Psychology," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 47 (2013), p. 295. See also, Kristjan Kristjannson, *Virtues and Vices in Positive Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 25.
[16] Gulliford *et al.*, p. 295.
[17] Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[18] Hursthouse, p. 49.
[19] Hursthouse, pp. 46-48.
[20] In "Moral Residue and Dilemmas," in H.E. Mason (editor), *Moral Dilemmas and Moral Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), especially pp. 41-44, I argue that these additional moral requirements are not evidence that the original situation was an irresolvable dilemma.
[21] Wellman, pp. 285-286, emphasis added. Later I shall distinguish between being *ungrateful* and merely *not grateful*.
[22] Hursthouse, p. 72 and p. 74.
[23] Hursthouse (pp. 67-68) holds that there are "irresolvable" dilemmas, and tragic dilemmas are one kind of irresolvable dilemmas. In several published papers, I have argued against the possibility of genuine moral dilemmas. See, for example, "Moral Dilemmas and Consistency in Ethics," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 8 (1978), pp. 269-287, and "Dilemmas and Incommensurateness," *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 27 (1993), pp. 247-252. Here my discussion can be understood as conditional: if there are tragic dilemmas, what follows?
[24] Hursthouse, p. 75. The case comes from Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism," in J.J.C. Smart and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism For and Against* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), pp. 98-100.
[25] Hursthouse, note 8, p. 73.

[26] Hursthouse, pp. 73-74.
[27] McConnell, *Gratitude*, pp. 66-72. I should note that Wellman (pp. 296-298) has expressed skepticism about the category of imperfect duties.
[28] Wellman, p. 285.
[29] Hursthouse, p. 78.
[30] In *Gratitude* (cited in note 1 above), I argue that gratitude is a narrow imperfect duty, and if an occasion is especially appropriate for discharging, then the agent has minimal discretion. See *Gratitude*, pp. 69-72.
[31] The seminal article on this intriguing topic is Gilbert Ryle, "On Forgetting the Difference between Right and Wrong," in A.I. Meldon (editor), *Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), pp. 147-159.
[32] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Terence Irwin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1985), especially Book VII.
[33] For a summary, see Kristjansson, *Virtues and Vices in Positive Psychology*, pp. 30-31.
[34] Michael Slote, *The Impossibility of Perfection* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), has an extended argument for this thesis. He makes a persuasive case for the claim that frankness and tactfulness are virtues, but they sometimes stand in opposition to each other.
[35] Kristjansson, p. 153. Kristjansson says that Daniel Russell, *Practical Intelligence and the Virtues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 112-117, calls virtue a *satis concept*, meaning that the term can be properly applied even in the absence of perfection.
[36] For a helpful discussion, see Kristjansson, pp. 156-159.