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Beyond a diachronic indifference? Grounding the normative commitment towards intergenerational justice

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ABSTRACT

In this essay, we aim at framing the 'negative emotion' of indifference, starting from its diachronic declination, which seems to beneficiate from a form of justification from the moral point of view (§1). In order to prevent indifference as an outcome – together with its intrinsic motivational strength –, we introduce a methodological account to frame the struggle of motivation internal to the single agent, by classifying different forms of 'reasons to act' (§2). We will develop a two-move strategy. Firstly, we deploy what we could call a positive emotion – the sense of solidarity diachronically understood – against that negative one, in order to show that indifference is not the sole possible destination for the humankind (§3). Secondly, to integrate and strengthen the motivational role of that positive emotion, we will rehabilitate a moral approach aimed at setting up a unique normative linkage among generations, by reshaping the interplay between 'wide' and 'narrow obligations' presented by Kant (§4). The ultimate goal is to contrast the moral strength which is offered by indifference as negative emotion by articulating a motivational path devoted at legitimizing the diachronic moral commitment and duties of justice among generations.

KEYWORDS Indifference; motivation; solidarity; intergenerational justice; Kant

The diachronic indifference and its intrinsic risk

There is no doubt that *indifference* is a negative emotion. Though we might enumerate different definitions of such concept, no possible meaning can avoid considering some stipulative clarifications which orient our understanding towards a unique comprehensive meaning.

From the agent's point of view, indifference alludes firstly to a sort of preliminary and constitutive focus of the individual on the self. In itself, this is something not immediately related to a negative emotion. It is a constitutive feature of what we are used to identify as a rational being (or, at least, a *human* being) to have a reflective experience of one's self, of one's own thoughts, fundamental values and of one's own body and

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physical features. Even if the assumption that this fundamental experience has a phenomenological/cognitive priority over any other consideration is still an open question (Di Francesco & Piredda, 2012; Varela et al., 2017), this facet does not imply a moral connotation in itself. Conversely, such a connotation emerges as soon as we enter the realm of intersubjectivity, or as soon as we start considering the net of intersubjective relationships which is constitutive of the personal identity of every human agent.

Here, the moral connotation becomes immediately evident as a sort of ambition towards a full self-sufficiency. *Prima facie*, a human being who is described as 'indifferent' is an agent who does not care about the differences, a person who is acquainted with a sole parameter of judgement, an irreplaceable set of values that her individual agency path is to be harmonized with. We might state that an *indifferent agent* is a person who does not care about 'the others' – and, fundamentally, about the multifaceted contribution that might come from them. There are a lot of terms which are apt to identify such a kind of person, but one of the less inadequate is selfish. Accordingly, a selfish person is an individual who does not care about the knowledge and judgment of others, about the presence – and, consequently, the goals – of other subjects which she is sharing space and time with. Now, by isolating only the moral sphere, it is a matter of evidence to consider this characteristic of human beings as a *negative* one. Also, we could admit that this feature is more than an occasional emotion, by considering the status of permanency that gives shape to the face of egotism related to all the meanings above-alluded to.

Nonetheless, there is a domain in which indifference seems to receive a sort of 'moral discount': namely, the multiple forms of (even public) tolerance. This is the domain in which indifference is understood diachronically, namely not as indifference among contemporaries, but rather as indifference directed towards persons that will come in the same place we are occupying now, but in the future. We are referring to an indifference focused on future human beings, that is individuals or groups that we will not have the chance to meet in person, individuals who will be not able to share their knowledge, judgment or presence with us and whose contribution to our 'sense of the self' is logically impossible to acquire. This is what we call *diachronic indifference*.

This kind of indifference might receive a moral excuse. On the one hand, we could raise good normative arguments to maintain the need of abandoning the indifferentist behaviour towards the others that are contemporaries to the single agent (which we are sharing the time-dimension with). On the other, we have to admit that avoiding indifference towards people that we do not know in person and that we will not have the chance to meet in the future is possibly to be understood as a far too demanding moral standard. How would it be possible for anyone to feel guilty for being indifferent towards persons who are unknown to them?

Unfortunately, the point is that the subject concerned by this kind of indifference constitutes one of the most relevant challenges of our time. By eschew considering future individuals and groups, we are running the risk of damaging future generations of human beings in very serious ways. Just to mention some crucial domains: the environmental sustainability, which includes climate change as a global, inescapable issue, and the sustainability of welfare systems, like healthcare and the pension systems, firstly (Pirni & Corvino, 2019; Pirni & Buizza 2020).

If we start by considering such points as domains where a diachronic indifference might take place, it should become clear that such a negative emotion can possibly orient our agency towards directions where the risk of creating negative systemic consequences and no return effects is really evident. From this perspective, diachronic indifference must cease to receive moral discounts. Rather, to avoid this kind of negative emotion and behaviour, it needs to be understood as one of the most relevant moral challenges of our time, triggering the fundamental need of an *intergenerational justice theory* from a different angle.

A struggle of motivation

Let's consider a basic situation in which an agent deals with a clear claim of justice. In order to introduce a situation that is closer to the above-mentioned rationale, let's consider an intergenerational variant of the same claim, following a quasi-syllogistic reasoning.

Prima facie and as *first major premise*, we know that the duties of justice constitute a relevant part of one of the most largely shared and accepted ideas of public good. As *second major premise*, we know that justice has to be demanded for everyone; still, a particular attention is to be given to the weakest, the most vulnerable individuals and groups, to those who have been damaged or will (might) be damaged by our (individual or collective) acts or omissions.

Also, as *minor premise*, we know that future generations appropriately correspond to the idea of weakness, vulnerability and damageability above alluded to.¹ Finally, as *syllogistic consequence*, we know that we have duties of justice towards future generations and we have to consider these ones as a part *pleno jure* of our individual and public duty.

Yet, such very common awareness and knowledge is not enough *per se*; it does not sufficiently motivate us to systematically orient our action in favour of future generations nor it does introduce such subjects within the range of recipients of duties of justice that have to be respected and fulfilled without exceptions. In other terms, we know that we should be motivated to act to accomplish this kind of duties too, yet we are extremely good at finding good motivations to skip them, or at least to postpone them in favour of other and

'more inescapable' duties that occupy and completely fill our individual and collective ability to act.

We might wonder why this happens so commonly. A tentative answer should consider how we are constructed as moral subjects, that is to take an action that is endowed with moral relevance. Accordingly, we should understand why objective 'good reasons' – or rational arguments constructed following an accurate logical interdependence among single premises and passages – very frequently are not enough to become 'one's own reasons': sources of motivation of one's own agency; namely, motivations to act (Mordacci, 2008, pp. 17–32).

In turn, to understand such crucial issue implies a quick *détour* within the debate between *internalism* and *externalism*. Before dealing with such debate as much as it is relevant here, we should clarify a basic meaning of the concept of 'reason' that we are using, in order to better enlighten the distinction between 'good' reasons and 'one's own' reasons above-mentioned.

In this regard, the defining account given by Scanlon is still of particular relevance: 'a reason is a consideration that counts in favour of something' (Scanlon, 1998, p. 17). In other terms, 'having a reason' means 'having a motivation', or having articulated and selected 'a force', a mental state which is able to move a single agent towards taking or avoiding a specific action.

Still, in moral theory, we are used to distinguish between two kinds of reasons. On the one hand, there are *reasons* which are able to *justify* a choice or a practical judgment. These are reasons that sustain the adoption of certain behaviours, that are able to show the validity of a specific choice and to offer a clear argument to adopt that choice as principle of the consequent action. On the other, there are *reasons* which are in charge of *explaining* why we favoured that choice over another, and why, due to certain specific circumstances, we decided to act in a certain way in that specific moment.

Several ways have been proposed to give shape to such a distinction: *justificatory* reason v. *operative* reasons (Scanlon, 1998), *external* v. *internal* reasons (Williams, 1981). In the present context, we will adopt the distinction between *justificatory reasons* v. *explanatory reasons* introduced by Mordacci (Mordacci, 2008, pp. 22–23). Naturally, each distinction is drawn accordingly to specific features. Yet, as a common ground for all those distinctions, three main elements are to be kept into account at the very least.

Firstly, we should consider the justificatory reasons as reasons that are valid in every time and space: we could say that such reasons are endowed with a *universal* validity (recalling our example: the duty of justice towards the most vulnerable people is valid independently from the specific place or time in which such claim is raised). Conversely, the explanatory reasons are

inevitably *contextual* ones: An explanatory reason is related to a 'here and now', to a specific timeframe and to a determined spatial context.

Secondly, in line with that first framing, we should maintain that, while the *justificatory reasons* are basically reasons for and from the *third-person* point of view (they indicate a state of affairs whose validity is predicated as such for each rational agent), the *explanatory reasons* are grounded in the *first-person* point of view, namely from my own point of view.

Consequently – as *third* point of distinction – we are used to define the level devoted to the *justification* as the *normative* one, namely the sphere where we are in search for the validity to the moral norms, whilst the level of *explanation* corresponds to the *descriptive* one, namely the sphere in which we isolate the motivation according to which that specific agent did that specific action.

Within this framework, we might recall the above-introduced distinction between *internalism* and *externalism*, which originated from the paradigmatic works by Falk (1986) and Frankena (1976). To put it in very synthetic terms, from an *internalistic* point of view we could maintain that the justificatory reason has an intrinsic motivational strength for each agent, or the knowledge of a duty, together with its correlative mental states, is self-motivating.

Conversely, from an *externalistic* point of view, the awareness about the moral norm is not sufficient to motivate the individual to act or not to act: the justificatory reasons are not *per se* motivating and they do not immediately trigger the agency. Rather, they can play such role as soon as those reasons couple with motivations – such as emotional or psychological factors – which are basically independent from any form of moral validation.

As it is well known, both points of view have to cope with strong objections. Against *internalism*, firstly: in case we give it for granted that the awareness about a duty is self-motivating for the moral agent, how can we explain the non-moral behaviour? Namely, why don't we live in a world inhabited by moral agents in the fullest sense of the term?

In turn, against *externalism*, let's imagine we have a moral awareness about the good which is grounded in strong arguments but let's admit to be motivated – and to act being moved – by something we cannot give a justificatory account thereof. That being the case, we would have to conclude that we are used to act accordingly to *invalid* motivations, namely, motivations that we are not able to justify by articulating rational arguments. We would experience a constant tension between what we must rationally sustain and want, and what we effectively do, in accordance with occasional mental states or random motives. The rational feature of any human agent would play a very limited role, up to become motivationally irrelevant: no moral perspective would accept such a consequence (Mordacci, 2008, pp. 29–32).

By rephrasing the point in our terms, on the one hand, we have to deal with a pretty long list of possible *internalistic*, quasi-syllogistic ways to describe intergenerational commitments and duties towards future generations. On the other, in order to reaffirm such approaches and to realize the correlative actions, we have to fight against several *externalistic* approaches that regard negative emotions, like diachronic indifference, as the most effective ways to motivate an agent or a group to act or not to act. The pragmatic strength of an externalistic approach is pretty evident here, as the difficulties to adopt effective political decisions and individual/collective behaviours to counter climate change are not ceasing to demonstrate, just to give an example (Pellegrini-Masini et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, we have to admit that the deliberative process which is internal to a rational agent is a more complex thing, and that a simple counter-positioning between two approaches – or two definitions of ‘reason’ – might not grasp its multifaceted comprehensive structure. In other terms, the moral identity or the authenticity of each rational agent is the result of an irreducibly individual way to find a synthesis, which is led by our practical reason, among different motivational sources (Koorsgard, 1996, pp. 100–101). Being an individual, that is, being a ‘self’, means to be able to grasp ‘the importance of what we care about’ (Frankfurt, 1988) by deliberating and selecting among different motivational sources: this is the result of a rational individual process which mediates among divergent motivations and that selects and joins the ones which are considered along a line of coherence from the first-person point of view.

Now, our argument can be reshaped as a struggle among moral motivations to be addressed within a line of individual rational coherence. In order to let this deliberative process function at its best, offering different options to the same faculty of will is more than welcomed, as well as enriching the overall picture by inserting alternative opportunities within the deliberative process which is always on the move.

A more complex motivational picture: the twofold constitutive role of solidarity

Let’s then enrich the list of possible ‘reasons’ (motivations), to be evaluated from the first-person point of view. Such an attempt will overcome the dualistic logic which distinguishes between *explicative reasons* and *justificative reasons* above presented, to try and verify the conceptual strength of a mental status which we would tend to evaluate as a positive emotion: solidarity.

We will thus proceed, firstly, by trying and redeem the ontological-phenomenological *facet* of that emotion. Secondly, we will suggest a brief

account of the history of solidarity, with particular reference to its ethical-legal declination.

To address the first point, we will synthetically share a twofold line of argumentation. The first one is devoted to qualify solidarity as an unavoidable ontological structure for the self. The second one is related to the phenomenological, namely the experiential facet of solidarity, which takes place in the world of relationships among subjects.

As for the first line, we can argue that the relationality of solidarity is first and foremost directed from the subject of solidarity to its internal self, before involving the external 'other' (Mancini, 2017). Each agent endowed with rationality is a relational being, a relation in herself. In case she were not, she wouldn't even be able to represent herself as a self, as a *being* equipped with a sense of self-identity. To perceive one's own self means to affirm a constitutive ability to link, that is to establish a relationship between different biographical 'segments', endowed with a meaning from the perspective of the self: the principle of self-coherence – which corresponds to the idea of authenticity and unrepeatability of each individual – would not have a standing without the principle of relationality.

To be noted is that relationality is not a synonym of solidarity *per se*. Yet, it does become so if we refer to the declination of the latter we hereby intend to explore, that is, as soon as we acknowledge that there is no better 'companion' to me than myself: I am 'the person' always and constantly closest to myself, the subjectivity who is always there to redeem the coherence of the discourse on their identity and personal story, even when that includes not only the logical chain of choices and actions but also a certain degree of self-indulgence over the evaluation of such choices and actions.

This basic awareness constitutes the basis for the second argumentative line. If solidarity is something that originally springs from within ourselves, we must still recognise that it shows up and became understandable, first and foremost, in our experience of the relationship with the other. Here is when the first qualification of solidarity as an emotion comes up: it is conceived as a movement towards the other person, as a push to be of any help, to the other who we perceive in need of such help, or the willingness to share the same goal with someone other (Sangiovanni, 2015). *Prima facie*, that movement is not thought to bring about any enduring consequence: it is an emotion, a mental state which is destined to be replaced by – or to stay in struggle with – other mental states, like the senses of inadequacies towards other people, self-confinement, self-interest and so on.

Notwithstanding, the most relevant dimension that solidarity pertains to be clear: to exercise solidarity means to live one's own life being aware that we share a destiny with the entire community of living beings: it means being aware of the radical vulnerability of the human. It means, in other words, to

consider solidarity as an authentic *passion* for that community which decides to build up a different pathway to that of egotism.²

Yet, the problem we need to face once we decide to embark on the pathway that takes solidarity as an emotion seriously instead of that of indifference is to oppose indifference in its diachronic declination, as the one we are considering here. In order to do that, a synthetic exploration of the historical-legal declination of the term solidarity could be useful.

The history of the concept is rooted in the legal neo-latin term *solidarius*, which comes from the Law of Obligations. Such concept, in case of a debt incurred by a plurality of subjects, indicates the debtors *in solido*, that is those that are responsible each for the entire sum that is owed. This same definition appears as one of the possible meanings of the term *Solidarité* under the relative item of the *Encyclopédie*, which in turn takes it entirely from the item *Solidité* of the *Dictionnaire universel du commerce*.³ In this way, thanks to the pervasive influence that the *Encyclopédie* will have in the entire European culture, the first term absorbs the significance of the second too, even if such constitutive co-belonging between *solidarity* and *solidity* is not that well known. But what matters the most here is a sort of exclusive and special relationship of reciprocal obligation that holds together the members of a same group of debtors, so that each of them is co-responsible *vis-à-vis* each other, to the point that they could be responsible for the entire debt.

Solidarity, when it uncovers itself even with reference to the *soundness* in the meaning we just outlined, expresses an obligation, a bond, though a limited one. I accept to be responsible for a debt contracted together with other individuals – but just if I feel a particular connection, if I feel close to such other individuals. Which means solidarity seems to describe both a motivational source and a limited normative obligation, based on a preliminary knowledge and on preliminary bonds which from the outset appear hardly to be enlarged and reproduced.

Also, such aspect of solidarity proves itself as totally *synchronic* and *horizontal*: I am sympathetic with those who belong to a certain group I identified, who share a certain *time* (the moment when the debt was contracted) and a certain *space* (the place where such agreement took place and where it applies), whilst I might be equally totally indifferent *vis-à-vis* many others.

Nonetheless, if we keep retracing the genealogical path of the concept of solidarity, we could possibly stumble upon the rise of a complementary need to find a new *diachronic* and *vertical* dimension of the concept.

This happened starting from the late seventeenth century, when the idea of solidarity, as generally understood – and not with reference to the specific usage of it that we have previously outlined – from being perceived as a mere ‘obligation deriving from wealth’ – that is, a moral duty of the wealthiest to give donations to the needy (see Locke, 1988, Chap. IV, § 42) – turns into

a public duty of the State *vis-à-vis* each and every of its citizens – which translates into the protection of the right to life, the right to food, the right to health (see Montesquieu, 1979, Chap. XXIX, Book XXIII). This way, the consolidation emerged of the concept of solidarity as a constitutional principle to function as the ground for social rights, which are differently present in all modern and contemporary European constitutions (Blais., 2007; Casadei, 2012; Ferrera, 1993; Rodotà, 2014).

Thus, a profound and enduring transformation of the concept of solidarity and of its social perception began, that made it start to be considered as a motivation to action. From being perceived as a social duty, a socially expected feeling of benevolence towards the others, the emotion of solidarity this way turns into a binding legal obligation, in the form of an *entitlement*. This passage thus marks an important evolution of the term even from the legal perspective. While solidarity used to be a valid concept just in the domain of Private Law (either Commercial Law or the Law of Obligations), by establishing a binding regime in the relations between private subjects, it becomes a relevant concept in Public Law as well, indicating the (not only) material support that each single individual expects from the State.

Now, with reference to the metamorphosis of the concept in its evolution, we apprehend that solidarity is not ‘simply’ a moral obligation questioning the individual conscience. Rather, it assumes the profiles of a right that can be claimed only thanks to the mediation of an institution that necessarily transforms its normative nature: it becomes a duty to be executed in an *impersonal* facet (every individual, independently from their reciprocal relationships, is endowed with a potential right to be the recipient of solidarity delivered as social help by the State), in an *intertemporal* sense (such claim is not tied to specific chronological limitations, but it remains a duty of the State notwithstanding the passing of time) and *beyond the local dimension* (in as far as it is not linked to specific territorial restrictions of jurisdiction, within domestic borders).⁴

In this way, solidarity acquires a *diachronic* and *vertical* dimension, involving not only those who are present in ‘the here and now’ but potentially expanding its scope beyond present places and times, thus including a significant and systemic alternative dimension to diachronic indifference (Pirni, 2018).

Grounding the normative commitment

Let’s consider again the basic awareness related to the scope and content of any form of solidarity: this is a reciprocal obligation that consists, at the very end, in being open to help anyone who is in actual or potential need. Such declination of the term paves the way for the universalization of the

obligation which goes beyond the mere contraposition between *negative emotions* (diachronic indifference) and *positive emotions* (diachronic solidarity).

We are not assuming here that the duties towards future generations should have a priority in comparison with the duties towards the present one. We will just argue that the former commitments cannot be excluded from the picture of (public) normative commitments due to the overarching priority of the latter, which have (too often) the tendency to assume an exclusivist role. Rather, they should be both managed within a unique frame which is strong enough to host both forms of commitments without any postponing of some of them *sine die*.

As we already explored, the reciprocity of the obligation stems from the legal dimension it belongs to each subject *must contribute* in proportion to their resources (e.g., with reference to the legal obligation to pay taxes) and, correspondingly, they *must receive* in proportion to their needs. Still, this same reciprocity, from its very emerging as a legal obligation, paves the way for a further dimension, this time a true ethical one, which articulates in a diachronic and intergenerational sense.

If we accept the co-responsibility of the joint payment, expressed by the term *solidarius* and if we declare ourselves available to 'pay for everyone', then each generation will have a strong interest in leaving to the upcoming ones the least possible debt. Secondly, it will in principle prove to be able to pay even for those debts which will be contracted by the members of the 'future' humanity. *Prima facie*, it may indeed seem counterfactual (or even absurd) to be asked to pay for debts which have not been contracted yet. However, the point here is not to refer to such a kind of payment, but rather to leave the widest possible set of opportunities to future generations (that is, not to deprive them from any of the existing ones nor to reduce their scope, e.g., regarding climatic-environmental concerns or issues related to public finances). If we keep such regulative ideal in mind, we place such future generations in the position of taking up the least possible amount of further debts, to be added to those we will not be able to honour and that will therefore necessarily need to be paid up by them (Palombella, 2007).

If we frame the issue in these terms, then the question over the presence of solidarity obligations in a diachronic sense relates to such theoretical paradigms which are based on the idea of an 'indirect reciprocity' (Gosseries, 2001). All such positions (though differently) share a fundamental assumption: each generation from time to time constituting the 'current' generation take up the obligation to pass on to the future generations what it received from past generations, in terms of goods, opportunities, achievements in the largest meaning of the terms. This way, a chain of obligations that keep on postponing the restitution of the 'joint debt' contracted is consequentially created.

However, such set of theories is subjected to a series of objections from an *externalist* perspective, in as far as it proves unable to coherently justify the creation of an obligation in the future, at least not without appealing to a source of motivation that is external to such a framework. Such objections seriously undermine the possibility to carry on with such a normative commitment and with the correlative duty of justice with respect to future generations.

The most relevant objection regards the causal implication linking the concepts of heritage as a 'gift' received from the previous generation to the 'duty' *vis-à-vis* the next generation. In fact, it looks counterintuitive that those who received a gift (the current generation) do not need to envisage any form of reciprocity *vis-à-vis* the giver (the past generation) but do feel it with respect to an entity (the next generation) from which, potentially, they may not be able to receive anything from (Barry, 1991; Gardiner, 2011; Meyer & Roser, 2009). The foundation of such a duty is therefore to be found in an external motivational source to the logic of reciprocity, namely in a collective pre-existing practice that prescribes, in a positive way, the need to deal with the interests of future subjects. Yet, the existence of such a practice is necessarily subjected to occasionalism and contextualism: it does not guarantee a stable and constant motivational foundation and it would risk to occasionally rehabilitate the result of diachronic indifference that we thought defused from the emotional perspective.

Also, the above-examined dialectic would reproduce itself even with respect to internalism: the reasons to justify the intergenerational obligation are not exempt from logic-argumentative objections and they are not sufficient to constitute a motivation for action. Once again, they are 'good reasons' yet they hardly become 'my reasons'.

In the following part of our reasoning, we would like to try a different path, for which the contribution that the moral Kantian theory may offer to the integration of an internalist perspective with respect to the motivational foundation of the intergenerational duties of justice deserves to be recalled.

An effective point of departure, from this perspective, can be offered by a selected reading of the *Metaphysics of Morals*. In the paragraphs VI and VII of Kant's *Introduction to the Doctrine of Virtue*, we encounter (at least) a point of relevance to our goal. The title of paragraph VI posits that '*Ethics Does Not Give Laws for Actions (Ius does that), But Only for Maxims of Actions*' (Kant, 2012, p. 152). Paragraph VII specifies that '*Ethical Duties are of Wide Obligation, Whereas Duties of Right Are of Narrow Obligation*'. Nonetheless, this does not mean that, being of wide obligation, the ethical duties may be considered as non-duties. This point is immediately made clear by Kant (2012):

But a wide duty is not to be taken as permission to make exceptions to the maxim of actions but only as permission to limit one maxim of duty by another (e.g., love of one's neighbour in general by love of one's parents), by which in fact the field for the practice of virtue is widened. (p. 153, emphasis added).

Basing on this rationale, three considerations might be relevant for the issue hereby discussed. *Firstly*, the author is suggesting that we have a unique normative tie that we can use to evaluate and to weigh all the alternatives even if, in the end, all the duties have to be undertaken with no exceptions: we can methodologically limit the pursuing of a duty by referring to the urgency of pursuing another one, firstly, but we cannot simply eliminate a duty, nor can we postpone fulfilment of it *sine die*. The model proposed here by Kant seems to offer a possible path towards the motivational structure we seek, which should remain both strong and flexible.

Secondly, to apply such distinction to our reasoning, a different 'destination' could be identified for legal and ethical obligations. *Legal obligations* always have a 'strict' implication: namely, the duty to pay taxes belongs to such category and it is not subjected to any interpretation or exception – the same applies to the duty of the State to aid those who need such aid. Furthermore, legal obligations belong to the set of *horizontal* and *synchronic*, and thus *intra-generational*, duties: they are duties managed within a State which exists in the here and now and they are executed by or for the benefit of those who exist in the here and now. On the other hand, ethical duties are of a different kind and lead to a different destination: they are subjected to the same normative bond, yet they allow for a certain temporal *latitudo*: they cannot be fulfilled, yet an ideal ranking can be produced. As a first approximation, from the perspective of the self, it looks reasonable to expect that the duties *vis-à-vis* those who are closer to the agent will be honoured first, and only then those *vis-à-vis* all the other subjects. This allows for what we have qualified as an *obligation ranking* (Pirni, 2019), though without weakening the normative bond to be respected at all. Such duties, however, seem to permit a determination in an inter-temporal facet that is, we would say, *diachronic* and *intergenerational*.

In order to clarify such point, we introduce the *third* consideration, which becomes evident from the paragraph VI above mentioned: '*Ethics Does Not Give Laws for Actions (Ius does that), But Only for Maxims of Actions*'. Ethics does not compel in the same sense that law does, but it provides will with a maxim, that is a subjective principle of action, that will itself is called to adjudicate whether to adopt or not. The bond between *individual freedom* and *universal moral law* this way is forged; that same bond that the *Critique of practical reason* had represented in a paradigmatic form.

Nonetheless, ethics does not end up here. It indeed proposes to individual will a principle based on which to evaluate the opportunity of pursuing such

subjective principle itself. We are here referring to what is commonly understood as ‘universalization test’, whose formula corresponds to the first formulation of the categorical imperative presented in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (Kant, 2010, p. 31). Such passage is significantly recalled in the context of the *Metaphysics of Morals* we are here referring to (Kant, 2012, pp. 152–153).

Ethics is therefore valid in the context of an internal selection process, one operated from the perspective of the self, among all the infinite possible maxims for action. Only that maxim which successfully meet the universalization test can become a categorical imperative. Still, what does it mean ‘to meet the test’ in this case? It means, first of all, to perform an exercise that looks towards the future that is, once again, diachronic. The necessity for a temporal offset is indeed implicit in the test. At moment 1 the operative possibility, a maxim in fact, which I decide to choose faces me. That maxim which I decide to turn into a motivational principle to guide my action only in force of the result of an exercise in imagination: imagining that, in a moment 2, any being capable of reason could choose that as a principle of their own action. In this sense, such test could be formulated in the following terms: ‘do select here and now only that maxim that, in any possible time and place, could be chosen by any being capable of reason’. Such a structure – which we would call *justificative reason* – implies, on the one side, the creation of a duty, that is a normative bond endowed with a ground which is exclusively internal to individual will and, on the other, a necessarily intersubjective validity, that is diachronic and over-contextual: it must be valid for any ‘here’ and ‘now’ and for any agent capable of reason.

In this sense, the idea of diachronic solidarity can be totally detached from the assimilation to indirect reciprocity – and its relevant objections – and it can become a *maxim* of diachronic solidarity, that is a normative principle of action founded on the practical reason endowed in any human being and which completes the motivational structure of individual action.

It is now clear that the entire discourse hereby investigated can be traced back to this maxim, particularly with reference to the overcoming of a diachronic indifference, which results counterpointed both with respect to a motivational emotional matrix diametrically opposite to that (that is diachronic solidarity) and through the opening up of a normative internalistic order, that justifies the validity and motivational reach of its own principles of action thanks to the diachronic, intergenerational and universal perspective on these very same principles.

Conclusion

The paper intends to legitimize a multiple normative framework to counteract the negative emotion of indifference towards future generations. After having framed the intrinsic strength of that emotion, it moves forward by analysing

different ways through which the agent's motivation process is structured. Two argumentative paths are here articulated against indifference. The first has been introduced at the emotional level, through the insertion in the picture of the positive emotion of solidarity and of the derivative idea of a diachronic solidarity. The second turns out by examining the same rationale and history of solidarity. The normative structure coming from it, which is expressed by the idea of social rights as public duties by the State, paves the way for a normative argument, derived from a Kantian frame: the idea of a *diachronic solidarity* as a *maxim* and justificative reason, which plays a direct – and *internalistic* – motivational role for the single subject towards future generations. Such normative structure is finally presented as able to avoid the standard objection of ineffectively and weakness of the 'indirect reciprocity' and diachronic commitments, and it can become a grounding part for a theory of intergenerational justice to come.

Notes

1. Without embarking now in a defence of future generations as subjects of rights (Brännmark, 2016), starting from empirical evidences, we can assume that they are 'weak entities' as they are not present in the public debate: basically, they do not have a 'voice', nor parties have incentives to support their claims (on this topic: Harris, 2019; Pellegrini-Masini et al., 2019).
2. Pirni (2018). The discourse here outlined could be enlarged by reshaping the very link between community and solidarity, towards a twofold path: that one related to a 'cosmopolitan justice', and that one implying the idea of solidarity as a grounding value for a more 'restricted' community, as the European Union, firstly. We can't enter here in this comprehensive framework. As a starting point for possible future discussions, see Heilinger (2019) and Ferrera and Burelli (2019).
3. On this point see Cunico (2017), pp. 183–189.
4. Of course, the discourse might be extended, e.g., to contemplate the relevance of the principle of solidarity for specific international entities like the European Union, or to link the same rationale to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Pirni, 2019).

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The author reports no potential conflict of interest.

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