Macintyre's "Critical" Place And Nature Of Virtue Ethics Within The Modern Moral System

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Abstract

This article examines the criticisms directed by the contemporary philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, who passed away in 2025, toward modern moral understanding and his efforts to reconstruct a virtue ethics grounded in Aristotelian principles. Beginning with *After Virtue* and continuing through his final work, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre criticizes the individualist, detached from practice, and isolated from social bonds character of modern moral theories and argues that these theories lack a common understanding of the "good life." According to MacIntyre, modern moral theories (as can be clearly seen in Kant and Kantian philosophers, utilitarians, Hume and neo-Humeans, Nietzsche and Nietzscheans, Moore, and existentialist philosophers such as Kierkegaard and Sartre) center on individual preferences and subjective attitudes, excluding social practices and the understanding of *telos* (final end). This article addresses MacIntyre's neo-Aristotelian critique of modern moral theories and attempts to explain the fundamental structure of ethics in MacIntyre's work through the concept of "criticism" that is free from dogmatism. In this context, we will attempt to show that MacIntyre developed his virtue ethics as a paradigm compatible with a secular community understanding that is distinct from a dogmatic, religion-based community understanding and different from contemporary liberal understandings.

Keywords: Alasdair MacIntyre, Virtue Ethics, Neo-Aristotelianism, Critique of Modern Ethics, Critique of Advanced Modernity.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most significant recent developments in contemporary moral philosophy is the emergence of virtue ethics as an important tradition in contrast to Utilitarian and Kantian moral philosophy. The main reason virtue ethics is as influential in practical ethics as it is in theoretical ethics may be that it evaluates our practical lives and practical problems in a deeper and more sensible way. This is because, unlike Utilitarian and Kantian ethics, virtue ethics does not merely seek to understand the "rules" that make an action moral, but also attempts to evaluate the components that make a life a "good life" by paying close attention to factors such as practical dilemmas, tensions, and social bonds. We can see this comprehensive research on the good life in virtue ethicists such as G.E.M. Anscombe, P. Foot, I. Murdoch, A. MacIntyre, B. Williams, and M. C. Nussbaum. Among these virtue ethicists, we can say that MacIntyre and Nussbaum, both considered Neo-Aristotelian philosophers, have perhaps developed the most systematic theories. While Nussbaum reads Aristotle from a liberal perspective, MacIntyre develops a communitarian virtue ethics theory against liberalism; he emerges as a Thomist Neo-Aristotelian.

MacIntyre impressively develops his theory after his magnum opus *After Virtue*, confronts the criticisms directed at him and his work, and makes some revisions to his theory based on both these criticisms and his own readings. However, as Solomon also points out, although MacIntyre underwent significant personal and philosophical changes, he maintained and developed many ethical ideas, such as his criticism of liberalism,

throughout his academic work (Solomon, 2003, p. 114). At the heart of his ethical understanding lies precisely this ethical thought, namely the critique of "liberalism" and, consequently, "modern moral philosophy" and, of course, "modernity."

MacIntyre's critique of modern moral philosophy has led some contemporary philosophers to level serious criticisms against him. For example, for the liberal neo-Aristotelian Nussbaum, MacIntyre is a kind of anti-theorist (Nussbaum, 2001, pp. XXVI-XXVII), someone who is distant from liberalism and supports education under religious authority (Nussbaum, 2012, pp. 62-65), while for others he is someone who challenges secular ethics, ignores the strengths of liberalism, and rejects the important gains of secular ethics that seek to overcome the historical tensions between "theology-politics", "theology-philosophy", and "theology-politics" and the "religious wars" (see Perreau-Saussine, 2022). Admittedly, while MacIntyre has arguments supporting such readings, the critical and secular aspects of his virtue theory, which he develops in a contemporary and profound way in *Dependent Rational Animals* and *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, written after *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice Which Rationality*, *Three Rivals*, weaken these readings. In this article, we will attempt to show that the virtue theory presented and developed by MacIntyre is a virtue theory that can be supported within today's secular perspective, which is distant from today's religious communities, and can be made functional in existing educational institutions, and that the concept of "dependence" that emerges in his later works is treated as a constitutive norm of critical reasoning.

Critique of modern moral philosophy as a critique of the critique of totalitarianism directed at macintyre

Perhaps the most serious criticism of MacIntyre's virtue ethics, developed after his work *After Virtue*, is that his philosophy reads the pre-modern philosophical tradition along non-liberal lines, influenced by figures such as Marx and Thomas. He seeks to develop a different narrative through philosophers such as Aristotle, Thomas, and Marx. The most provocative aspect of constructing this narrative is its challenge to modern moral philosophy. It is precisely this challenge that has disturbed liberal, Enlightenment philosophers. Understanding this tension is crucial for grasping the place and importance of MacIntyre's virtue ethics within today's social structure, as he develops his alternative through this criticism.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre attributes the underlying cause of the problems of modern ethics to their inability to see that the contexts, beliefs, and practices in which their moral concepts are rooted have now disappeared. For example, concepts such as "virtue", "justice", "compassion", "duty", and even "necessity" have acquired meanings different from their original ones when transferred from the different contexts in which they were once used to today's culture (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 11; Anscombe, 1958, pp. 1-19). This situation has led to a contradictory and conflicting, arbitrary, selection-based evaluation of concepts and premises (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 2-3). Moral language and moral concepts are losing their order, as we can observe in the changes in their meanings, and are trying to exist in *chaos*. Ethical philosophers, who are in endless disagreement, cannot offer us a rational path to reach a consensus. Amidst the plurality of ethical theories, determining which theory is valid and which theory guides our actions is entirely a matter of "choice", "attitude", and "expression of feelings" (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 11-12).

There is undoubtedly some truth to this fundamental claim put forward by MacIntyre, particularly in *After Virtue* and his subsequent works. The reason for this is that we are currently in irreconcilable disagreement about how to solve our most vital issues, such as hunger, poverty, and environmental problems. As MacIntyre also states in his explanations of justice, we are far from reaching a consensus that would allow us to resolve issues of justice fairly. The fundamental reason for this irreconcilable disagreement is the absence of

a shared practical life upon which theoretical life is built, as it was in the Greeks; everything is based on individual choices. In advanced modern life, the lack of common measurability, the absence of hierarchy and harmony among the good, and the inability to find common ground in the face of our practical problems constitute a major obstacle. MacIntyre's criticism of modern ethics is directed precisely at this loss of common ground. Modern ethics focuses on the individual and his or her "choices" instead of this common ground. In this ethical approach, which MacIntyre defines as emotivist and which has its roots in Moore, the individual's own attitudes and choices, the satisfaction of their desires, are always at the forefront (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 10; MacIntyre, 2016, p. 68).

According to MacIntyre, the most important consequence of this individualist understanding based on choices is that social roles and practices lose their fundamental values and are evaluated independently of the individual's social roles. For example, for Kant, the basis of individual morality rests on the "universal," "abstract", and "formal" commands of the "pure reason" of the "free" individual, independent of the effects of social roles and practices. Similarly, for Sartre, the individual is a series of possibilities independent of social roles (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 32). Moreover, according to MacIntyre, contemporary expressivists such as Stevenson, Blackburn, Gibbard, and Frankfurt argue that ethics is fundamentally about wanting (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 64). For example, according to Frankfurt, the desires, emotions, and pleasures expressed in our individual actions and mental states are what motivate us (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 6). According to him, we are free as long as we identify with our desires (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 44).

Nietzsche had expressed this understanding of freedom before Frankfurt. According to Nietzsche, the most important goal in life is to be the author of our own lives and to create our own values; his "will to power" corresponds precisely to this demand (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 43). In modern life, perhaps one of the most important consequences of the change MacIntyre addresses is the narrowing of the meaning of Ethics and its separation from its aesthetic, theological, and legal dimensions (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 38). However, as MacIntyre points out, given the state of modern moral philosophy, Ancient Greek philosophy, including Aristotle, may be considered philosophically primitive. As Miller points out in his impressive work "Homer's Challenge to Philosophical Psychology", the problem is that figures such as B. Snell, influenced by Kantian modern moral philosophy, have not found Greek ethics sufficiently profound compared to modern ethics, placing great importance on concepts such as autonomy and personal identity. However, as B. Williams points out, although Homer's world is different from ours, it functions within a complex network, and its connection to ethical life is more competent and powerful than in the modern world (Miller, 2009, pp. 4-46).

Nevertheless, it can be said that a progressive Greek ethical reading has been made, extending to the tradition of virtue ethics. Perhaps the fundamental discomfort with a communitarian Neo-Aristotelian-Thomist reading, such as that of MacIntyre, may even be related to this approach. This is because MacIntyre, while criticizing many understandings that developed alongside modern philosophy and to which there is strong adherence, pays attention to Aristotle and to ways of life that remain more faithful to classical philosophy. For example, one of the most important issues in which modern philosophy, especially modern moral philosophy, has distanced itself from Aristotelianism is the sharp distinction between fact and value. For example, for Kant and Hume, there are no teleological features in the external world of the natural sciences, and reason cannot grasp any particular structure. Therefore, these philosophers do not accept the "teleological understanding of human nature", which is an understanding of human nature that determines a specific end. According to them, factual premises cannot lead to moral conclusions or evaluations because an argument that contains elements not found in the premises cannot be successful

(MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 54-55). According to MacIntyre, for today's moral philosophers, the expressivists, factual and evaluative judgments are also separate; it is not possible for a judgment to be both factual and evaluative at the same time, and evaluative judgments are universally valid (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 114).

As MacIntyre points out, another reason for criticizing modern philosophy's challenge to classical philosophy—and consequently labeling MacIntyre as anti-theoretical, totalitarian, undemocratic, and communitarian—is their complete rejection of the Aristotelian understanding of human nature. This is because modern moral philosophy has excluded the concept of "a human being capable of actualizing his/her own *telos*." For Aristotle, human nature is uneducated; only when it realizes its own telos can a rational ethic be constructed. Therefore, one of the most distinctive features of Aristotle's ethical scheme was the "fundamental opposition between the real human being and the human being who can become aware of his/her own nature". Ethics emerged as a inquiry that made possible a transition that eliminated this opposition. (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 52-54).

Within the modern rationality and ethics project, this Aristotelian schema, particularly the abandonment of human nature with a specific *telos*, has led to the disappearance of ethical content and teleological context. According to MacIntyre, this understanding, which lies at the heart of modern moral philosophy, has made it impossible to legitimize rules due to the loss of moral content and teleological context, that is, the factual context of moral content (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 111-112), and moral rules have begun to contradict each other. Modern moral philosophers have attempted to urgently establish a status for rules within these contradictions. However, according to MacIntyre, these philosophers, especially Utilitarians and Kantians, "cannot see that they are building on the inconsistent fragments of the coherent scheme of thought and action found in the classics" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 55). Although Utilitarians and Kantians have tried to find a way to convince individuals after the collapse of traditional morality's teleological and hierarchical external authority, they have failed (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 67-68). For example, the pleasure-based utilitarian criterion of happiness, which aims to bring the maximum happiness to the maximum number of people, appears to be a criterion devoid of content and amenable to ideological uses, and its claims to objectivity are also baseless (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 64-65). Moreover, as MacIntyre points out, human desires are too heterogeneous to be addressed through pleasure; it is impossible to determine the entirety of what is specific to the individual and society based on pleasure. Therefore, despite the nature of pleasure, to say that it provides us with a rational criterion is to present a fiction. According to MacIntyre, we must accept that understanding pleasure in this way is a fiction (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 70-71).

According to MacIntyre, Kantianism, like Utilitarianism, cannot provide an objective criterion. He argues that Kantian philosophers such as Alan Gewirtz cannot justify the idea that we possess the "freedom" and "right to a good life" deemed necessary for the agent they propose (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 66). The reason for this is that the concept of rights necessary for freedom is based on rules established in a specific social period and context, meaning it has no connection to the universal nature of humanity. Furthermore, such social practices and institutions have not always existed "everywhere and at all times." According to MacIntyre, "claiming rights in a place where such a social structure does not exist is like writing a check to make a payment in a social order where the institution of money does not exist" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 67). Therefore, both Utilitarianism and Kantianism operate with certain fictions for MacIntyre (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 73).

As can be seen, MacIntyre's critiques, in a sense, demonstrate to us in detail and historically the claim Anscombe put forward in her article "Modern Moral Philosophy". However, the important issue for MacIntyre is that these practical assumptions, based on these

constructs, have materialized in our lives in the form of aesthetic, therapeutic, professional, and bureaucratic expert characters (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 73). These characters are authorities who value pure activity and impartiality with an attitude detached from morality (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 74). They emphasize the importance of "universal engagement" for everyone, independent of culture or social order, which is one of the fundamental characteristics of modern morality (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 115). Among these characters, bureaucrats are people who rationally know how to adapt "tools to ends in the most economical and efficient way", while professionals are people who regulate tools with the impartiality of natural scientists and enable people to act in a harmonious manner (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 76, 77, 86). In fact, these types are those who embody a specific value within the real-value distinction (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 107).

According to MacIntyre, the "professional effectiveness" of a state based on social control is entirely fictitious, because social order, like chance, has many uncontrollable structures (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 107). Life does not permit the kind of foresight claimed by Enlightenment thinkers (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 93-94). "We are thus involved in a world in which we are simultaneously trying to render the rest of society predictable and ourselves unpredictable, to devise generalizations which will capture the behavior of others and to cast our own behavior into forms which will elude the generalizations which others frame." (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 104). Therefore, the effect of luck on our lives cannot be ignored in any way (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 105). Life inevitably involves luck-based events. For this reason, MacIntyre and other virtue ethicists before him, such as Aristotle, Williams, and Nussbaum, have given luck an important place in discussions of the good life (See Nussbaum, 2001; Williams, 2006). As can be seen, MacIntyre's critique of modern moral philosophy targets precisely the most defining characteristics of modern philosophy, ethics, politics, and understanding of humanity: the fact-value distinction, the rejection of the relationship between ethics and teleology, and the desire to control fate through science. The validity of MacIntyre's criticisms is becoming increasingly apparent, because, as we just mentioned, even Williams and the liberal Nussbaum have advanced their philosophies by giving luck a central role.

Despite this common understanding in virtue ethics, the point that liberal philosophers like Nussbaum do not want to accept in MacIntyre's virtue ethics is that the community must be based on a foundation of virtues and inner goods, with strong solidarity, and that loyalty and hierarchies have their place and importance in these communities. For example, in these social relationships and practices, a manager, a parent, or an experienced member of society may have a greater influence on shaping the character of a young person. For advanced modern societies where individualism has reached an advanced stage, this may be seen as a controlling approach. Because at a point where individualism is sanctified, character is considered more unifying through universal political rules rather than a community understanding based on solidarity. From this liberal perspective, MacIntyre's virtue ethics would appear highly totalitarian. However, as we have indicated, this perspective should not prevent MacIntyre's virtue ethics, which is developing along secular lines, from developing further. The rapid development of virtue ethics along secular lines, both theoretically and practically, in many fields such as philosophy, education, art, economics, and politics directly supports our claim.

The main reason for liberal criticism of MacIntyre is the close link he establishes between ethics and politics, reading ethics within a more inclusive framework of the good life; because Modern Morality, which emerged as a system in modern societies, is a secular doctrine and system that narrows the scope of ethics. This moral system operates with universal principles that are binding on all actors, and these principles both satisfy and limit the desires of the individual (hence the concepts of egoism and altruism come to the fore).

These moral principles are abstract and general in nature and binding on all individuals. (In this context, concepts such as "right action," "duty", "benefit", and "right" are central to ethics.) Autonomy is extremely important in this system. Moreover, this type of Ethics is superior to other ethical systems (MacIntyre, 2016, pp. 115-116). Within the principles and rules of this secular life, religion emerges, as we might expect, as a matter of individual choice in the Kierkegaardian sense. The presence of religious institutions within secular life is limited in a way that does not allow conflicts to arise (MacIntyre, 1981, pp. 3-4).

As can be seen, for MacIntyre, religious virtues have become individualized alongside secular life, and their social role has weakened. In the virtue ethics he develops in *After Virtue*, MacIntyre focuses on virtues that will be valid for all communities rather than religious virtues. Although Thomistic Aristotelianism began to attract attention in *Whose Justice Which Rationality*, *Three Rivals*, in *Dependent Rational Animals* and *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, he attempts to develop the line of *After Virtue* more rigorously without conducting a Thomistic debate or a religious debate. As we noted earlier and as Solomon rightly points out, the impact of MacIntyre's character assessments in ethics and politics has not been limited to the religious sphere; in fact, it has had a profound impact on secular theoretical and applied ethical work. It is important to note that one of the areas where the influence of his virtue ethics is perhaps least apparent is the religious sphere, and that it is much more influential in the secular virtue ethics literature. The fundamental character of MacIntyre's virtue ethics is also to develop a non-liberal theory of the good life based on solidarity, commitments, social relationships, and virtues, rather than a religion-centered community life.

MacIntyre seeks to develop a virtue ethics based purely on cooperation, without eliminating the individual, without allowing for critical, conservative prejudices, marginalization, or limitations, and without dwelling too much on whether it is secular or not. Almost all of the communities he focuses on in his book *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity* are secular rather than religious. Indeed, in *After Virtue*, rather than giving religious values a central role within the community, he focused on virtues such as "honesty", "courage", and "justice", which are central values for all communities. In his later works, he deepens his virtue theory along libertarian lines, explaining that we must be critical thinkers, possess free imagination, and exercise independent rational reasoning. In his virtue-based communities, there is no place for blind obedience that disregards one's own individual reason and decisions, self-sacrificing devotion, prejudice, marginalization, Machiavellian political instrumentalism, or lack of criticism. We can see this virtue ethics as communities enriched by philosophy, art, and religion, existing in all traditional societies before liberalism and modernism. We will now attempt to clarify this claim through his works After Virtue and his two later works, *Dependent Rational Animals* and *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*.

MacIntyre's Critical and Emancipatory Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics in Response to Modern Moral Philosophy

MacIntyre believes that this Aristotelian tradition, which had been rejected by modern thinkers for many years, could be revived. In Chapter 14 of *After Virtue*, titled "The Nature of Virtues" (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 181-203), he attempts to show how this might be possible. First, as he points out, the nature of virtues has changed significantly over time, leading to conflicting theories about virtue. For example, the *New Testament* emphasizes virtues such as faith, hope, love, and humility, which are not found in Aristotle, but neglects the virtue of *phronesis*, which occupies a very important place in Aristotle. Benjamin Franklin, one of the founding fathers of America, could have characterized things like cleanliness, quietness, diligence, and gain as virtues; that is, for him, gain, corresponding to

pleonexia in Ancient Greece, could have been accepted as part of virtue (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 181-184).

MacIntyre states that despite the fact that virtues have changed greatly and there are conflicting understandings of virtue, we can understand the nature of virtues and arrive at a fundamental understanding of virtue that is unifying for us (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 186). According to him, the three degrees that constitute the components of virtues and are in a special relationship with each other will give us the essence of virtues (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 186-187). The first degree is "practical activity", the second degree is the "narrative unity" of human life, and the third degree is "moral tradition". For MacIntyre, the most characteristic feature of virtue theory that we can understand at the level of practical activity is that practical activity encompasses both internal and external goods. What he means by practical activity refers to a wide variety of established and ongoing activities such as architecture, agriculture, families, cities, nations, art, science, games, Aristotelian politics, and family life (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 187-188).

In this context, MacIntyre argues that we can better understand practices through the "internal goods" that they contain. According to him, practices consist of two types of goods, as mentioned earlier: "external goods" and "internal goods." External goods are goods such as prestige, status, and money; for example, playing chess for sugar is an external good, and the fundamental characteristic of such goods is that they are the object of a "competition" in which there will be winners and losers. Internal goods, on the other hand, correspond to goods that are unique to the practice itself and can only be obtained by experiencing that practice, such as playing chess for the sake of playing chess, and are the telos, or purpose, of our activities (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 190-191). According to MacIntyre, virtues or vices are character states directly related to internal goods; because without virtues, it is impossible to attain internal goods through the practices we develop and sustain; that is, we need virtues to attain these goods within practices.

The virtues that MacIntyre particularly emphasizes for sustaining and developing practices are, as mentioned earlier, "honesty", "courage", and "justice". According to him, it is only through these virtues that we can learn to whom we are indebted, take risks on our path, and protect "individuals, communities, and ends". Another important aspect of possessing these virtues is that they enable us to gain the listening skills that allow us to see our shortcomings and respond carefully (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 191-193).

Another point to note regarding the practice MacIntyre focuses on is that these are distinct from institutions. According to this distinction, chess and medicine are practices; chess clubs, universities, and hospitals are institutions. Institutions are generally concerned with external goods of a competitive nature, such as money, power, and status, as mentioned earlier. According to MacIntyre, even if these external goods have real value for practice, they serve a different function than internal goods based on virtues. For example, in places where virtues are cultivated, it is not easy to possess external goods such as wealth, fame, and power. Virtues can conflict with these external goods; in fact, without these virtues, it is very difficult for the practice to resist competitive forces (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 194-196).

MacIntyre explains some of the ways in which the virtue theory we have discussed so far differs from and shares common ground with Aristotle as follows:

Differences:

1-This concept of virtue has a teleological character that does not require Aristotle's metaphysical biology. However, in *After Virtue*, he considers that he made a mistake on this point and, in *Dependent Rational Animals*, attempts to reveal the biological foundations and relations of teleology, just like Aristotle (See MacIntyre, 2002).

2-He argues that, depending on the number of good people, opposites may exist in the pursuit of virtues, and that these opposites may not be related to character flaws, unlike in Aristotle (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 198).

3-Even if virtues acquire their meanings and functions through practice, their sphere of influence in life extends beyond practice (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 200-201).

4-Practices are historical in nature, relative to a specific society.

Similarities:

1-Although this understanding of virtue distinguishes virtues from one another based on differences in action, as Aristotle does, it essentially accepts the relations between practical reason and passions and, based on this commonality, approaches the means-end distinction and the relation between reason and passion as Aristotle does.

2-In this understanding of virtue, desire and pleasure are not related to Utilitarianism as they are in Aristotle (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 196). There is no common criterion between internal and external goods related to pleasures (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 198).

As can be seen, MacIntyre owes a great deal to Marx in his analysis of practice. There are very important characteristics that distinguish practice from a conservative, closed social structure. Criticism comes first among these. Practices are open to criticism, and virtues themselves support this criticism (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 200). As long as the person voices these criticisms as part of the practice and has acquired internal goods. Otherwise, the criticisms will remain empty within the practice. What is expected of a professional within these practices is to be able to make wise decisions and to increase participation in a way that will increase association, that is, a kind of participatory democracy is involved. Within the practice, hierarchies and divisions of labor are maintained in solidarity, unlike the alienating, bureaucratic functioning found in capitalist advanced modern societies. In this respect, we are faced with a small Greek city and *agora* where there are no sharp class divisions.

MacIntyre's focus on this critical approach within practices in his later works, such as *Dependent Rational Animals* and *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, demonstrates that practices can be sustained through a dialogue and critique specific to philosophy. Without this wisdom and philosophical dialogue, the development and vibrant continuation of a tradition is impossible. MacIntyre sees the development of practice in a Hegelian sense as occurring through philosophical means; religion does not conflict with philosophy on this path but must be compatible with philosophy and many components of society; otherwise, conflicts will be inevitable. Where these conflicts are not resolved but instead grow, practical communities will inevitably disintegrate or, even if they continue to exist, cease to be communities.

MacIntyre, within the community, considers the critical thinking and independent reasoning that he deems necessary for the community to acquire a tradition to be a "dependency" relationship that enriches rather than impoverishes, in stark contrast to liberal theories. According to him, we must become "independent practical reasoners" who can make independent, rational judgments about our actions and decisions during the developmental stages from childhood to adulthood (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 71); because only in this way can our character gradually be completed. According to MacIntyre, such a completion, developing towards virtue, is only possible by changing our desires according to intellectual and moral virtues through education and the support of others (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 83, 84, 87), meaning that in this process, the support of others is vital for our development as independent thinkers (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 73); for only in this way can we prevent our intellectual and moral errors; for example, not having sufficient knowledge, not acting according to proof, being overly influenced by someone we dislike, not being sensitive to someone's pain, etc. (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 96). This learning process is not

merely a process of acquiring subjective knowledge; it is a process that can only take place within our relationships with others. The presence of others, their approval, and subjective knowledge can be good practical reasoners; we can acquire "virtues" and "physical skills, talents, moderation, and a character capable of good judgment." (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 94). As MacIntyre rightly emphasizes, since this development begins in childhood, the starting point of moral philosophy also encompasses childhood (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 81). In this respect, rather than treating individuals as completely independent, free, autonomous, and practical reasoning beings, as modern moral philosophy does, MacIntyre attempts to understand them in terms of dependencies and solidarity, considering our many subjective flaws and our vulnerable, fragile animal nature. He seeks to develop a virtue theory that considers not only our capacity as rational beings to act independently but also our childhood, old age, illnesses, and the reality that we may need someone else.

MacIntyre's explanations regarding the nature of the practice he developed based on this virtue theory are structured as a communitarian school that develops our experiential wisdom and enables us to acquire internal goods. The practices he emphasizes aim to keep our children away from assimilation into economic market life from an early age, unlike today's modern communities. The unfortunate thing is that the values of freedom and autonomy emphasized by advanced modern society are instrumentalized within a market-oriented education system in a manner consistent with market values. This is because, in today's education system, freedom and autonomy can function as skills necessary to achieve the creativity and flexibility required by the economic market. The fact that today's education system is so far removed from the basic skills necessary for sustaining one's life, such as being unable to work the land, repair one's home, or cope with many simple problems, should not cause us to forget that this is a situation where we are being trained solely in the way the market wants, under the guise of "specialization."

In light of these conditions, it is important to understand the structure of MacIntyre's virtue theory after *After Virtue*; clearly, this structure, as we mentioned earlier, is an alternative and communitarian paradigm of lifestyle that does not allow for religious affinity. In this context, MacIntyre's own examples are meaningful and important. In these examples, MacIntyre focuses on a kind of village life rather than describing a religious, closed community. One of the most important issues within such practical structures is not to lose the virtues and internal goods that enable this practical structure to develop, historicize, and become traditional in the face of external goods. In advanced modern societies, perhaps the most challenging test is to live in harmony with these internal goods. MacIntyre is aware of this difficulty, which is why he places particular emphasis on the virtues of "integrity" or "stability" alongside "courage", "justice", and "honesty" when addressing these communities (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 202-203). The reason for this is that a consistent sense of *self* is very important in practice; *self* does not appear fragmented, as it does in modern times. Narrativity is what gives consistency to our lives and, consequently, to ourselves within practices. As MacIntyre points out, life is not merely a series of unrelated events (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 205); life essentially progresses through narratives with a specific history (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 207). "Man is, in his practices and actions [his deeds, ed.], as much a story-telling animal as he is in his fictions." (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 216). In other words, practices and the virtues that support them are narrative in form, and every narrative has its own history. Thus, within these practices that appear in narrative form, we experience a certain drama in which we are constrained by others as leading actors (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 207). The introduction to this teleological drama has been written by others, and as we play our role within this narrative, we inevitably encounter many unpredictable and unknowable situations (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 215-216).

As MacIntyre impressively points out, "the sources of storytelling are politically and morally important for a culture." (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 236). In this regard, for MacIntyre, "mythology is at the center of everything" (MacIntyre, 2007, p. 216). This is because we learn to be responsible individuals through mythological narratives and stories. This responsibility is realized through the actualization of our personal identity, that is, by giving our actions and character integrity and consistency. In this sense, within the concept of "personal identity", "narrative", "understandability", and "accountability" are closely related (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 218-219). In this process, understanding ourselves and others begins with listening and then continues with telling stories. Through stories, we can see the comical, tragic, and epic aspects of our own lives, distinguish between them, and "escape the deceptive world of satire, parody, and caricature" (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 219-220). Virtues present this life, which is a teleological narrative form, as goodness that enables us to live successfully, free from mistakes and errors, in the face of various evils, temptations, dangers, and intellectual traps (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 219-220). Within the narrative coherence that is a component of virtues, it is very important that we live and end this life in the best possible way. Consequently, for MacIntyre, the character of the practices we are part of makes us dependent on others and on society; that is, we do not possess the autonomous, independent nature we imagine. We come into the world under the influence of many factors—such as family, culture, and language—that are based on causes outside ourselves and beyond our control.

Now, in MacIntyre, the fact that this community, this practice, is so decisive for us as individuals does not mean that it makes us autonomous and independent individuals, or that we are passive individuals in the face of the community; that is, we are not passive in the face of our fate. MacIntyre, with philosophy, criticism, and imagination, makes us individuals active and independent within the boundaries of tradition and practice; because in order to make good choices, we need not only virtues, but also critical philosophy and imagination. In particular, "imagination" broadens our horizons by allowing us to see different options. MacIntyre therefore emphasizes that it is very important for children to learn to find different alternatives in their imagination from an early age (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 74–75, 83). As we have indicated, he attempts to construct a philosophy that does not ignore childhood (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 81–82). He states that children must learn to think about what they did yesterday, what they are doing today, and what they will do tomorrow through their imagination, and that "imagination will set limits on children's desires and practical reasoning" (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 236).

As MacIntyre rightly points out, to expand this imagination, we need more suitable narratives that shed light on political and moral life, as Aristotle, Aquinas, and Marx did. However, as he notes, the capitalist state and free market ideology make this alternative imagination difficult. The capitalist system has made it incredibly difficult for us to be "economic, political, and moral opponents" and to write narratives that will allow us to develop our "imagination" in various ways (MacIntyre, 2016, pp. 237–238). For the moral system tightly shapes our desires within the functioning of the state, society, and the economy (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 135). Advanced modernity compartmentalizes life through incompatible norms; therefore, within such compartmentalization, we lack consistent narratives that would activate our rational powers and organize our goods. (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 207). In this regard, MacIntyre now takes a more cautious approach to the claim he made in *After Virtue* that this Enlightenment project would fail; he does not make this claim in his latest work, *Ethics in The Conflict of Modernity*. He is aware that advanced modernity persists and has grown even stronger; it presents us with new *Leviathans* (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 124). These *Leviathans*, through state institutions, the market, and the system of Ethics, take from us the self-knowledge necessary for us, as rational agents, to

make correct judgments. Within this deprivation, finding answers to our practical problems and organizing our lives is becoming increasingly difficult.

As MacIntyre points out, education within this all-encompassing system does not help us at all; it focuses solely on equipping us with skills suited to the needs of the market (MacIntyre, 2016, pp. 166–170). However, as MacIntyre says, today's schools should be places that nurture a sense of end that helps children find their own way and develop their strengths, rather than focusing on the demands of the workplace (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 173). It is important that schools, like families and the workplaces we mentioned, have a common good that they strive to achieve. The existence of this common good ensures that we approach our relationships and thinking as family members, students, teachers, and workers in a way that leads to the realization of this common good. Thus, individuals strive to achieve this common good; they question the place of common and individual goods in their lives in decision-making processes and carefully organize these goods with an eye to the common good. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Education is far from being an institution that builds the common good. Educational institutions are either places that limit us or arenas for acquiring the skills necessary to pursue our own good, the satisfaction of our individual preferences. As a result, educational institutions and other communities such as workplaces appear as structures that hinder our goals or as mere tools for satisfying preferences (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 174).

In a system where education is so deeply integrated, where creativity and imagination are directly aligned with market demands, where everything moves at an incredible pace and is focused solely on the present, it is vital to evaluate life and, of course, our understanding of the good life within a historical consciousness, without neglecting alternative ways of living, in order to avoid living in an illusion. MacIntyre, in *After Virtue*, draws particular attention to this situation; he says that we must "seize the opportunities that the past makes possible for the present" and act with "a future derived from the past" in a way that does not weaken the internal goods of these alternative practices. This historical consciousness, rooted in tradition-based practices, will progress dialectically by keeping its opposites alive rather than ending them (MacIntyre, 2007, pp. 222–223). Within the narrative structure, the individual determines who they will be through such living conflicts. They struggle with the difficulties of being a good person and living a good life from birth to death.

As can be seen, MacIntyre's virtue ethics, alongside critical, independent thinking, views the existence of conflicts and tradition as necessary for the dialectical development of individuals. However, this individual and social development, and the associated understanding of a good life, is tied to an inclusive development and way of life, far removed from an abstract, absolute, independent, isolated understanding of the individual. This is because such is our nature; from birth, we are, in our vulnerable and fragile state, like Aristotle put it, social and political animals who need others. MacIntyre, in *Dependent Rational Animals*, following *After Virtue*, aims to develop a sense of care and responsibility towards youth, old age, illness, disability, and accidents within modern society, taking into account our biological nature, and to create an alternative based on virtues within that structure. In this alternative society, neither the good of the individual nor the good of the community is subordinated to the other (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 108–109). The understanding of the good life develops within relationships of dependence and independence (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 113).

For MacIntyre, we must carefully construct a sociality that encompasses not only our individuality but also our social dimension, our nature, and our biological makeup, within the relationship between dependence and independence. To this end, he believes that it is crucial to raise children in a way that values their independence and critical thinking as much as they value caring for other members of society, especially those with physical

difficulties, disabilities, and the elderly. This is because children raised with care and attention realize that they too may become disabled, sick, or elderly when they grow up, and can act with a sense of responsibility that nurtures shared needs and the common good. According to MacIntyre, this development in children is not related to fear; this awareness develops within a relationship of giving and receiving, particularly in relation to the virtues of independence and dependence (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 145–146), and this relationship creates a mutual obligation between us. In this voluntary relationship, my interests bind me to others, and certain benefits rationally direct us toward one another. However, according to MacIntyre, this bond occurs on the basis of sympathy in relation to disabled people and non-human animals (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 145). The impressions and sympathies we experience enable us to establish relationships with each other based on a certain obligation (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 115–116).

MacIntyre states that practices of giving and receiving based on just generosity must first begin within our own community and then expand beyond it, drawing attention to *Oedipus* of Sophocles in this context (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 123). In this tragedy, Oedipus, who was ordered to be killed, is not killed but handed over to someone else. MacIntyre says that, as in this example, even if we are not part of the community on the basis of pure humanity, we must establish a bond and act without needing to think more about someone's pain or urgent needs. Within our community relationships based on just generosity, we can welcome strangers and support them in a benevolent manner (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 126). We can approach this independently of relationships, in proportion to need, especially with the virtue of *misericordia* mentioned by Thomas (i.e., feeling sorrow for another's pain and being charitable) (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 123–124). With this virtue, we can feel another's sorrow as our own and love that person as our neighbor (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 126). Regarding this virtue, it is very important that we transform prejudices against those outside the community (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 142) and transform feelings such as hatred, disgust, and fear—and be especially careful about things that blind us and practice virtues is very important (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 138–139).[1]

As can be seen, MacIntyre's communities based on virtue ethics aim to prevent hate speech, which is neglected within today's abstract rules. For MacIntyre, social relationships based on the virtue of generosity, which will be realized fairly, cannot develop within modern economic and social relationships (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 131); because in these relationships, there is no connection between the common good based on virtues and the necessary public goods; citizens act as if they are aiming for a fictional common good, far from establishing a collective bond (MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 132–133); the modern state is politically "far from the just generosity that would establish the common good of the relationship of giving and receiving" (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 133; MacIntyre, 2016, p. 125). According to MacIntyre, this good can only be achieved today in local communities such as sports clubs, schools, and adult education classes (MacIntyre, 2002, p. 134). As can be seen, the religious character or connection to religion of these communities is not the issue here; the aim is to make visible the social structure in which internal goods and virtues, which have no place in advanced modernity, can flourish and spread.

CONCLUSION

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[1] It is meaningful that Martha C. Nussbaum, who criticizes MacIntyre, also says that we must overcome such prejudices and that she shares this view with MacIntyre because, for contemporary Aristotelians, abstract rules and theories based solely on reason are not sufficient for establishing and maintaining a good, respectable society; practical transformation at the emotional level is as necessary as theoretical explanations (see Nussbaum, 2013).

As we have emphasized so far, MacIntyre's virtue theory questions prejudices about other societies and individuals. The virtue-based communities that this theory focuses on have nothing to do with closed communities that are distant from criticism, debate, and philosophy, and that feed prejudices and feelings of hatred. The communities established by virtue theory emphasize the common good of the whole without eliminating the individual. In this respect, MacIntyre's communities do not produce a theological-philosophical or theological-political tension. His observations about religion are that it has become overly individualized and distanced from other areas of human activity; we can all relate to this. The instrumental uses of such an understanding of religion can also be very widespread. On the other hand, religion can undoubtedly be liberating; it can support the virtues that sustain communities and internal goods. In this cruel world, religion can reach out to the poor; it can enable us to develop virtuous feelings towards the powerless, defenseless, and dependent. This social function of religion is extremely important and useful in that it nourishes the emotional realm where abstract rules do not apply. Not everyone has the opportunity to establish these bonds through family ties, education, literature, or philosophy; in this respect, religious elements that support the common good should be important even for a secular person; this is also the aim of Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (*TTP*).

The problem, as we mentioned earlier, may arise when an education that produces a culture of obedience is provided within a form of religion that is closed to philosophy. Particularly in developed impoverished societies, many poor people can be easily manipulated through religion. Some religious communities make a special effort to exploit people's weaknesses, suppress their imagination regarding different ways of life, brainwash them in a sense, and foster feelings of hatred and disgust towards those who are not like them. Clearly, this situation completely contradicts MacIntyre's communities; he dreams of a community like the fishing village where he grew up: a community where production, education, family relationships, and all internal goods coexist in harmony without conflict. This was the first thing he said when we met; in our hour-long conversation, he didn't even mention religion, he talked about his village. In this respect, a MacIntyre-style community; for example, in Turkiye, people who value traditional virtues, who consciously try to live by them, who are educated and, most importantly, non-capitalist; in contrast to liberalism's ruthless, competitive structure centered on defenselessness and the pursuit of maximum pleasure, we can say that it corresponds to alternative lifestyles based on cooperative production, close relationships, caring for the elderly and disabled, a good education that informs about different life opportunities, social celebrations, and living in harmony with nature and animals. As MacIntyre points out, an economy organized around the idea of the common good can provide greater support for production, and this cooperative lifestyle has made a difference even in today's economy.

MacIntyre has made the **aletheia** (truth) of such communities, which he has personally experienced, visible through philosophical evaluations. Thus, he opposes a philosophy that has lost its place in life and has become marginalized at a purely theoretical level, as is the case today; he focuses particularly on the virtues of those who will make the right decisions—especially leaders. In a sense, he reintegrates philosophy into our practical lives and attempts to reconnect communities with philosophy. For this reason, he attaches particular importance to narratives; he accepts that the foundations of purely theoretical philosophy are insufficient. In the search for the common good, harmony among the good need not be established solely in pursuit of a teleological goal; the happiness sought by the community, the culture and traditions it establishes; our biological nature as *Dependent Rational Animals* and the spiritual beliefs of Eastern religions can play a certain teleological role.

Finally, let us also say this: MacIntyre develops virtue theory by analyzing advanced modernity from within. As MacIntyre points out, some of us may find the workings of modernity inevitable and may value some of its achievements; particularly in terms of the Aristotelian way of life concerning the regulation of the common and individual good, he reminds us that we live in an age where *polis*—in Thomist terms, *civitas*—has disappeared, replaced by bureaucratic institutions and liberal pluralism (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 176). MacIntyre does not deny that modernity has incredible, commendable achievements and should therefore be valued. However, as he points out, within the same modernity, "new types of oppressive inequalities, new types of material and intellectual impoverishment, new disappointments, and the constant misdirection of desire" emerge. There are many different stories to tell about modernity, and they are all true (MacIntyre, 2016, p. 124). When faced with this fact, especially when the world is getting worse rather than better, becoming destructive, we cannot ignore the serious theoretical and practical problems of modernity that are common to all of MacIntyre's works. Along with his critiques, MacIntyre has also attempted to offer alternatives that would make life more livable. We must understand this effort, preserve our hope for a better, happier—that is, virtuous—life, and strive for it.

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