
EXCERPTA E DISSERTATIONIBUS IN PHILOSOPHIA

CUADERNOS DOCTORALES

DE LA FACULTAD ECLESIAÍSTICA DE FILOSOFÍA

PUBLICACIÓN PERIÓDICA DE LA FACULTAD
ECLESIAÍSTICA DE FILOSOFÍA
UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA / PAMPLONA / ESPAÑA



Universidad
de Navarra

BERNARD CLAUDIAN BUYANZA

Favorable conditions for the growth in virtues in Alasdair Macintyre's thought

[Condiciones favorables para el crecimiento de las virtudes
en el pensamiento de Alasdair MacIntyre]

VOLUMEN 32 / 2023

SEPARATA

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PUBLICACIÓN PERIÓDICA DE LA FACULTAD ECLESIAÍSTICA DE FILOSOFÍA / UNIVERSIDAD DE NAVARRA
PAMPLONA / ESPAÑA / ISSN: 1131-6950
2023 / VOLUMEN 32

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Esta publicación recoge extractos de tesis doctorales defendidas en la Facultad Eclesiástica de Filosofía de la Universidad de Navarra.

La labor científica desarrollada y recogida en esta publicación ha sido posible gracias a la ayuda prestada por el Centro Académico Romano Fundación (CARF)

**Redacción, administración,
intercambios y suscripciones:**
«Cuadernos Doctorales de la Facultad
Eclesiástica de Filosofía»
Universidad de Navarra. 31009
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Edita:
Servicio de Publicaciones
de la Universidad de Navarra, S.A.
Campus Universitario
31009 Pamplona (España)
T. 948 425 600

Precios 2024:
Número suelto: 25 €
Extranjero: 30 €

Fotocomposición:
Pretexto

Imprime:
Ulzama Digital

Tamaño: 170 x 240 mm
DL: NA 1024-1991
SP ISSN: 1131-6950

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Extracto de la Tesis Doctoral presentada en la
Facultad Eclesiástica de Filosofía de la Universidad de Navarra

Pamplona
2023

Ad normam Statutorum Facultatis Philosophiae Universitatis Navarrensis,
perlegimus et adprobavimus

Pampilonae, die 28 mensis novembris anni 2023

Dr. Sergius SÁNCHEZ-MIGALLÓN

Dr. Ruben PEREDA

Coram tribunali, die 12 mensis decembris anni 2022, hanc
dissertationem ad Lauream Candidatus palam defendit

Secretarius Facultatis
D. nus Eduardus FLANDES

Cuadernos Doctorales de la Facultad Eclesiástica de Filosofía

Vol. XXXII, n. 2

Presentation

Abstract: A virtue centered theory of ethics requires an acceptable view of the human good. Alasdair MacIntyre helps us to give a central position to virtues, understanding ethics and human action from the perspective of virtues. The virtues enable the pursuit of the good life intended for humans. Following MacIntyre, we expound the elements which favor human flourishing, defend the family and community which favors human flourishing. Morality should not be personal but rather of the community. The virtues influence rational action and in this way affect the human good. Thus, the virtues are defined in terms of the human good

Keywords: MacIntyre; virtues; moral growth; human good.

Resumen: Una teoría de la ética centrada en las virtudes requiere una visión aceptable del bien humano. Alasdair MacIntyre nos ayuda a situar las virtudes en una posición central, entendiendo la ética y la acción humana desde la perspectiva de las virtudes. Las virtudes permiten la búsqueda de la vida buena prevista para los seres humanos. Siguiendo a MacIntyre, exponemos los elementos que favorecen el florecimiento humano, defendemos la familia y la comunidad que favorecen el florecimiento humano. La moral no debe ser personal sino de la comunidad. Las virtudes influyen en la acción racional y de este modo afectan al bien humano. Así, las virtudes se definen en función del bien humano.

Palabras clave: MacIntyre; virtudes; crecimiento moral; bien humano.

MacIntyre's moral theory is basically a morality of the Virtues. From the publication of his book *After Virtue* which took place in 1981 MacIntyre became known even more. There he argues about what he considers the failure of the enlightened project of a rational foundation of morality and then the abandonment of the classical tradition of the virtues. He therefore establishes a return to the pre-modern or classical tradition of the virtues for he believes that this is a plausible foundation on which to build morality. He also points out how the Nietzschean critique of morality falls short of Aristotle and in a way vindicates the moral tradition of the virtues in the face of what he calls the reigning cultural emotivism.

After that followed other fundamental books such as *Justice and Rationality* and then *Three Rival Versions of the moral Inquiry* in which he already declares himself a decided follower of St. Thomas. And then *Dependent Rational Animals*, where he says that reading a prayer, for example, of St. Thomas helped him to understand not only rationality but also the dependence of human beings, that is, the dependence we have on our fellow human beings to flourish as persons.

Finally, after other very important works, but not so important, he followed in 2016 with *Ethics in the conflicts of modernity*, which is a book as complex and rich as *After Virtue*. So he is a catholic thinker, a Christian philosopher who continues to be heard in the contemporary world, he continues to question us and is not afraid to say things that today may sound politically incorrect. He is a voice that represents an Aristotelian-Thomistic thought, which defends the need of the family, the need of the community¹ to be able to grow in the personal level, leaving aside the individualism so unchecked in our world.

The concept of virtues is very central in ethics² and to most of the ethical authors who have spent their precious time studying and writing about ethics in general and on moral philosophy particularly. From the very early beginning of the philosophical reflection among the ancient philosophers like Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, as far as to Thomas Aquinas' time, we find that the question of «virtues» or virtuousness reappears with a considerable frequency. Regardless of the centrality of the concept of «virtue» among ethicists there are still

¹ MacIntyre claims that we must look to what emerges from history to find a basis for our moral standards. In his Marxism found that there is a great human desire for community. Since this desire for community brings with it a desire for the morality that could support community, he concludes that the desire for and maintenance of human community could provide the necessary link between the social practices of morality and the desires of the human agent. The deepest desires of modern individuals can only be met through membership in a community and this requires adherence to its standards (cf. LUTZ, C. S., *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre, Relativism, Thomism, and Philosophy*, Lexington Books, United Kingdom, 2004, p. 39).

² Is worthy clarifying from the start what is meant by the terms ethics and morals as per A. I. Melden's explanation in order to have a guided understanding of the these terms. «The term ethics is derived from the Greek word «ethos», which originally meant customs, habitual conduct, usages, and later, character. The term moral is derived from the Latin «mores,» which signifies customs or habits. But customs and practices, particularly those of one's own group, evoke approval, hence «ethics» and «morals» have reference, in one of their important uses, to the things, whether customs or conduct, motives or character, of which we approve as good, desirable, right, obligatory, worthy, and so forth. In this sense, the terms are honorific, and are to be contrasted with the terms «unethical» and «immoral.» In a wider sense, however, the terms refer to conduct, character, motives, and so on, toward which such approval or disapproval (the letter being expressed by such terms as «bad,» «undesirable,» «wrong,» «evil,» «unworthy») is relevant. In this sense the terms «ethical» and «moral» are to be contrasted with «non-ethical» and «non-moral» respectively. But when we speak of the ethics and morals of a person, we usually refer to a set of rules or principles-expressed either in the indicative or in the imperative mood-which are taken to specify the kinds of conduct that he regards as desirable. We speak of the ethics or morals of this or that person even where we disapprove; and we contrast a person having an ethics –i.e. a code of conduct– with one who has none at all, who is unprincipled, who follows or respects no set of rules that mark, in his opinion at least, desirable conduct. (See MELDEN, A. I. (ed.), *Ethical theories: a book of readings*, 2nd Edition with revisions, p. 1).

a number of differences at the moment of understanding virtues. These differences in understanding «what is to be meant by virtue» or «virtuousness» are very significant as they affect greatly the role virtues have in contributing to the flourishing of the human being according to how each author takes virtue to be. This is to say that virtues have a lot to do with the well-being of humans.

Ethics studies human actions and behavior aiming at getting to know the right way to direct human action so as to fulfill the purpose of his being. This is to say that a proper treatment of the contents of ethics as a subject will lead to a proper understanding of human action and behavior. Since virtue is one of the important contents of ethics it therefore needs to be looked upon with depth in order to understand it well and see how it contributes to human flourishing. This is what the ethical theory developed by Alasdair MacIntyre³ intends to achieve: to understand ethics and human action from the perspective of virtues because without the virtues the goods⁴ are barred to us. The virtues enable the pursuit⁵ of the good life intended for humans.

³ For a general view of the life and philosophy of MacIntyre, see BELLO RODRÍGUEZ, H. J., GIMÉNEZ AMAYA, J. M., *Alasdair MacIntyre*, FERNÁNDEZ LABASTIDA, F., MERCADO, J. A. (eds.), *Philosophica: Enciclopedia filosófica on line*, ISSN 2035-8326, <http://www.philosophica.info/archivo/2021/voces/macintyre/MacIntyre.html>; and GIMÉNEZ AMAYA, J. M., *La universidad en el proyecto sapiencial de Alasdair MacIntyre*, Eunsa, Pamplona, 2020, pp. 26-37.

⁴ By the goods here we refer to what MacIntyre denominated the internal goods that is the goods internal to practices. (MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtues*, 3rd Edition, University of Notre Dame Press, p. 191).

Due to the various editions the book has gone through in a span of some year from the time of its first publication, we will be using references from the three editions of *After Virtue* namely; *After Virtue. A Study in Moral Theory*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, in its 1st edition 1981, 2nd edition 1984 and the 3rd edition in 2007. It is evident that MacIntyre had had to react in whatever way convenient to some of the positive and negative comments to his *After virtue*, and sometimes he has given his sincere acknowledgement of having improved his thinking on some things of which he had a different opinion previously. For example, in the prologue to the third edition Alasdair MacIntyre, Admits to have now understood much better the nature of the relevant Aristotelian commitments than he did twenty-five years ago. Such developments in his thought have come as a result of 'reflection on Aquinas's texts, the commentary on those texts by contemporary Thomistic writers and on the stimulus of criticisms of *After Virtue* by those who were in radical disagreement with it' he admits. (Prologue to the 3rd Edition, p. xi-xii). This is very important to such an extent that we need to include all the changes in the author's mind and thought in order to accommodate new thoughts or any other changes in his previous thought due to whatever reason.

Christopher Stephen Lutz admits that MacIntyre's philosophical convictions have changes significantly over the year to bring to our mind that sense of development sometimes changes in his previous thought. See *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre*, p. 7.

⁵ In his *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, MacIntyre says that «what is to be discovered is how to order the passions so that they may serve and not distract reason in its pursuit of the specific

A virtue-centered theory of ethics requires an acceptable view of the human good which will enable us to show how morality can be explicated in terms of character traits that are indispensable or useful for the attainment of the good. Perhaps because it is so difficult to find such a view of the good, the virtues have not occupied a central position in modern moral philosophy. And, to those few modern moral philosophers who try to treat the theme of virtue in their ethical reflection do it in a way that makes it even more difficult to understand virtue properly and does not satisfy the need that virtues have in ethical reflection.

Alasdair MacIntyre, being one of the most important authors in contemporary ethics and political philosophy, believes that it is both possible and important to overcome this difficulty. In his treat of the *After Virtue* one of the most renowned ethical books under his authorship he brings to the open this idea of a virtue-centered theory of ethics specifying that it is possible to define what a human being is or to give an account of the human good if and only if we are able to consider the idea of a good human being. Without the idea that man has a specific goal which he/she is naturally called to fulfill during his/her life it is difficult to see meaning and purpose in the things that he/she does. Actions are given intelligibility by the purposes they intend to save.

He tries to respond to this problem from a purely social perspective but latter on discovers and admits that there is a need of linking human life with a metaphysical purpose. Attaching a metaphysical⁶ purpose to human life endows human existence with a sense of being and purpose. This brings in the place and role of the virtues in the life of the human beings and without virtues MacIntyre sees it difficult for man to achieve his human good. So the virtues

and, the good. What has to be understood are the different relationships in which the passions may stand to reason and to the will and to the different dispositions to judge and to act which exhibit a right ordering of the passions. So an antinomialist philosophical psychology provides the basis for an account of those dispositions which, perfectly possessed, are the distinctively human perfections, the virtues». (See p. 139)

⁶ Here is what MacIntyre say: «But I had now learned from Aquinas that my attempt to provide an account of the human good purely in social terms, in terms of practices, traditions, and the narrative unity of human lives, was bound to be inadequate until I had provided it with a metaphysical grounding. It is only because human beings have an end towards which they are directed by reason of their specific nature, that practices, traditions, and the like are able to function as they do. So I discovered that I had, without realizing it, presupposed the truth of something very close to the account of the concept of good that Aquinas gives in question 5 in the first part of the *Summa Theologiae*» (cf. MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. ix).

will be defined by MacIntyre in function of the human good. The constructive argument in the second half of the *After Virtue* makes it clear that ordinary people can recover the standpoint to the virtues⁷ through rational action, involvement in practices and attention to their social identities.

In *After Virtue* he offers an original and wide-ranging theory of morality as primarily a matter of virtue. He puts it forward as alternative to current theories which he sees as preoccupied with moralities of rule or principle. But it remains clear in his discussion that morality is not about rules and principles. To access his position we need to understand how he views the problem his moral theory addresses.

MacIntyre does not approach philosophical ethics in familiar ways. This is due to his understanding of the history of the subject and to his analysis of the condition of morality in our culture. Briefly put, his position is this: «Morality in our time is in a state of crisis». Society is rent by controversies which are unresolvable because the positions of each side rest on premises so disparate that no rational choice among them is possible. Moral language retains its objective meaning, but, as the emotivist saw, it is actually used to forward personal or class ends. People view even their own principled commitments as contingent choices. The modern self⁸, he contends, «has no necessary social content and no necessary social identity»⁹. We can understand this condition only by seeing how it arose.

In the seventeenth century Northern European culture¹⁰ rejected Aristotelianism. This meant rejecting the Aristotelian vocabulary of functional

⁷ Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, distinguishes clearly those virtues whose birth and growth is a result of being taught, that means the intellectual virtues from those which owe their birth from exercise or practicing, from which he confirms the idea of habit. The virtues, he says, we get by first exercising them, «... by doing the acts that we do in our transaction with other men we become just or unjust, and by doing the acts that we do in the presence of danger, and by being habituated to feel fear or confidence, we become brave or cowardly», *NE*, II, 1103b5-25.

⁸ See a detail discussion on the self or individual in modernity terms and the consequences of giving primacy to the notion of individual, typical of modernity. Two authors argue that giving primacy to the notion of individual has generated a social scenario of competition between individual preferences and desires: BELLO RODRÍGUEZ, H. J., GIMÉNEZ AMAYA, J. M., *Valoración ética de la Modernidad según Alasdair MacIntyre*, pp. 165-166.

⁹ MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 32. «This democratized self which has no necessary social content and no necessary social identity can then be anything, can assume any role or take any point of view, because it is in and for itself nothing.»

¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 39.

terms and there with the idea of humans as having a natural *telos*¹¹ or end. Thus the idea of a natural human good disappeared, and MacIntyre argues at length that two consequences followed.

The first problem as a consequence of the rejection of Aristotelianism is that it became impossible to give any rational justification of morality. He pinpoints some of the historical episodes in the history of philosophy in which moral discourse became fragmented. These occurred in a time in which the practice of philosophy had a central role and influence upon society. He traces that history to the Enlightenment, in which moral questions were first considered distinct from theological, legal, and aesthetic questions, and thus a project of conceiving an independent rational justification for morality became a central concern of Northern European culture. MacIntyre puts it clear that «the breakdown of this project provided the historical background against which the predicaments of our own culture can become intelligible»¹² – and thus that the Enlightenment was the predecessor culture to which emotivism is a response.

The second consequence of the rejection of Aristotelianism is that morality itself ceased to have a coherent relation to the nature of the humans it was meant to guide. Morality, in the first place, aims at understanding human action and behavior and secondly aims at guiding us as humans through some generally accepted moral norms so as to reach the intended goals. So we see that the reconstruction of MacIntyre's argumentation serves the clarification of why the option for Aristotelian tradition is for him the only appropriate way of grounding ethics on a more plausible constitutive notion than that of the rule, preferred by the enlightenment.

In his arguments he says that modern moral philosophy separates moral reasoning about duties and obligations from practical reasoning about ends and practical deliberation about the means to one's ends, and in doing so it separates morality from practice. Following the key emphasis of MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, we clearly see that he emphasizes on recovering Aristotle's notions of human action and practical reasoning for, according to him, this may open path to real progress in moral philosophy. Recovering Aristotle's

¹¹ The concept of the *telos* points to an ultimate object or aim of a moral purpose, a *telos* which provides the moral justification for the society. Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, p. 173.

¹² MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, p. 39.

conception of practical reasoning and justifying Aristotle's contention that the virtues enable the pursuit of the good life will help us to defend the place and roles of the virtues in contributing to the achievement of the human good.

A kin study of Aristotle's ethics reveals that for Aristotle ethics studies human action and the virtues necessary for effective practical reasoning and deliberate human agency. Ethics studies and treats things that lead us to the pursuit of true happiness and it is a necessary part of such a pursuit. This view is different among the moderns who think that the pursuit of human personal happiness and its achievement are two different things. But the «Aristotelianism» on which MacIntyre builds his argument will lead us to understand that as moral agents we 'achieve' human moral freedom, that it is not something already given. A virtuous agent or the excellent, in Aristotle, is the one who judges well about 'what is good' and what is best to do, and follows through on that judgment. MacIntyre says that

«... for an Aristotelian, whether Thomist or otherwise, what is good or best for anyone or anything is so in virtue of its being of a certain kind, with its own essential nature and that which peculiarly belongs to the flourishing of beings of that kind. Particularities of circumstance are of course highly relevant to the determination of what is good and best for one here now. But what one brings to each particular situation, if practically well-educated, are dispositions to judge concerning those particularities in the light of truths about the good of one's species. And to be practically well educated is to have learned to take pleasure in doing and judging rightly in respect of goods and to have learned to be pained by defect and error in the same respect. So the pleasure and pain which are mine qua me supervene upon that doing or being or achieving good which is mine qua rational animal. Take away the notion of essential nature, take away the corresponding notion of what is good and best for members of a specific kind who share such a nature, and the Aristotelian scheme of the self which is to achieve good, of good, and of pleasure necessarily collapses. There remains only the individual self with its pleasures and pains. So metaphysical nominalism sets constraints upon how the moral life can be conceived».¹³

¹³ MACINTYRE, A., *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, p. 138.

Moral freedom, therefore, is identical with virtue. Without the virtues the subsequent goods internal to practice are barred to us as MacIntyre will contend.¹⁴

A virtue-centered ethics aims at bringing about human flourishing and such flourishing is possible to those who embrace the idea of flourishing as a human community against the individualistic mode of flourishing. Modernism presents a false image of consensus that prevents us from viewing our institutions critically, that prevents us from recognizing that these institutions are institutions that stand for a tradition and an ideology. That is the reason why we find a tension between an individual, or self as MacIntyre calls, against institutions or the polis in classical terms. MacIntyre will tell us clearly that «for many seventeenth and eighteenth century thinkers» the idea of a shared good is strange such that «each man seeks to satisfy his own desires».¹⁵ Virtue, in Homeric poems, is a matter of being good at doing what one's role required in the society and politics was the art of ensuring that what is best should flourish. In this way of thinking MacIntyre will tell us that, like in Aristotelianism, the search for the human good is not a 'one man's show' but rather a common endeavor because in the traditional Aristotelian view «what education in the virtues teaches me is that my good as a man is one and the same as the good of those others with whom I am bound up in human community. There is no way of my pursuing my good which is necessarily antagonistic to your way of pursuing yours because the good is neither mine peculiarly nor yours peculiarly. This means that goods are not private property. Hence Aristotle's definition of friendship, the fundamental form of human relationship, is in terms of shared goods.»¹⁶

Since we focus on the understanding of the virtues and the role they play in helping and leading us towards the attainment of the human good, we will follow and finally give a MacIntyrean account of virtue through stages as he does in order to reach to a full account of the same. This account of the virtues proceeds through three stages of which the first concerns virtues as qualities necessary to achieve the goods internal to practices. This stage consists in pinpointing the locus of virtues in which MacIntyre denominates practice. A second stage considers the virtues as qualities contributing to the good of a

¹⁴ MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 191.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

whole life and here MacIntyre explains the overall framework in which virtue and practice are situated, that is the narrative order of a single human life. A third stage in the definition of virtues related the virtues to the pursuit of a good for human beings the conception of which can only be elaborated and possessed within an ongoing social tradition. Then, a basic question need to be answered; why is it that all the stages toward a full definition of virtues have to do with the human good? It is only because human beings have an end towards which they are directed by reason of their specific nature that practices, traditions and narratives are able to function as they do. They are aimed to lead us to the human *telos*. Once again, it is evident that human actions are given intelligibility by the purpose they intend to save.

An important point of communitarianism is its critique of the liberal view of the self and ethics and politics, that is to say, a critique of an individualistic view of the human being. As one of the most important authors in contemporary ethics, Alasdair MacIntyre proposes a different view of the human being basing his thought on the self as a person in a community, who share a common good. His view is against individualism which can be defines as an ethical theory based on three points as David Lorenzo puts it; «1)The essence of human being is freedom, freedom based on autonomy, autonomy which is understood mainly as ‘independence’. This independence means independence ‘of’ anything that is not the own autonomy, and it constitutes the aim or objective to be protected in every field of individual life. In this way, the individual is both the author and the owner of his qualities. 2) Through that autonomy, the individual defines his particular interests, changing interests whose value is based only on the fact that they come from an independent choice. Moral values depend only on this autonomy and Politics depends on the maximization of those individual interests. 3) Society is understood, consequently, as an association of independent individuals united by utilitarian relationships. Society is only a means for the maximization of individual interests, and individual autonomy can be reduced only because of this maximization. Thus, the law would be just a restrictive means to harmonize the search for that maximization»¹⁷. In short, modern liberal society can only be a collection of citizens

¹⁷ LORENZO, D., «A. MacIntyre: Person, Community, and Tradition against Individualism», en *Ramon Llull Journal of Applied Ethics*, [on line], 2020, Vol. 1, Núm. 11, p. 89, <https://raco.cat/index.php/rljae/article/view/368528>.

from nowhere who have banded together for their common protection. They possess at best that inferior form of friendship which is based on mutual benefit or usefulness. Our societies have now days abandoned moral unity, hence the inevitable absence of true bonds of friendship.

Now what are the basic elements that MacIntyre considers as constitutive of a human being? Against the individualistic view of the human being, MacIntyre uses a set of concepts on which he builds that which he considers an alternative to the modern individualistic view of the human being. He speaks therefore of concepts such as narrative person, flourishing, virtues and community. He does not think of a human being as a static being, and does not deal with human being as individual but rather he deals with every human being. To understand better his position is wise to start with the concept of flourishing which means that a human being is a being that develops itself, is always changing, progressing, that is to say generally that the human being flourishes. According to MacIntyre, someone flourishes as a human being when he has achieved independence in practical reasoning. This includes two features: to achieve an appropriate idea of good, and to achieve virtue to some extent. From this reasoning, in this concept of flourishing, independence is not the purpose but only a means to an appropriate definition of good, what the virtue requires. The concept of human flourishing makes it possible to see individual life as an account, as a narrative unity.

Well, in the three chapters that make up the centre of this work, we develop the premises contained in this initial hypothesis: 'there are certain conditions favorable for the growth in virtues according to Alasdair MacIntyre'. And we do so with a meditated and conscientious study of MacIntyre's great work, the *After Virtue*, something very worthy of note in an era like ours in which the darkness of modernity and liberal culture abound. Modernity rejects conventional social relations accusing them of inauthenticity and this rejection results in the degradation of the integrity of the self. Consequently, our society lacks shared moral principles, society lacks a solid foundation, and the notion of a good shared by man is considered an Aristotelian chimera. Each man seeks by nature to satisfy his own desires.

There is such a big contrast between the traditional conceptions of life with the modern way of life. In modernity, human life is dissolved into a series of heterogeneous present moments, separated from each other thus the unity of human life is lost sight of. The traditional conception of life, commitments and responsibilities to the future arise from past episodes in which obligations

were contracted, and the duties assumed unite the present with the past and the future in such a way as to form the unity of human life.

In our discussion, in the first place, we will give a brief view on what MacIntyre has to say concerning modernity and its main characteristic features. A little of what is discussed will consist in evaluating the moral culture of modernity pinpointing its endless disagreements, the features dominating moral debates in modern moral philosophy, its conceptual incommensurability and how a variety of historical origins of premises and concepts affect argumentation especially when they are used without taking a serious consideration of their original historical content and context.

Thus, the first chapter exposes MacIntyre's vision, strongly critical by the way, of contemporary moral culture; a criticism that points above all against the pretended value neutrality of academicism in use today, its pretension that nothing should be valued and, even less so, if it is moral science; And this is what, in a way, makes the «moral catastrophe» of our time invisible, since we are so used to assume that one moral follows another that the «moral disorder» we are facing goes, let us say it this way, unnoticed, since the very language of order and disorder are beyond the reach of the current academic mentality. All this has led us to an emotivism that has replaced practical rationality and the tradition of virtues by the mere and simple predominance of emotions and passions.

In the next chapter we will focus on MacIntyre's moral philosophy elaborating the concept of virtues and education. Since the virtues in the MacIntyrean ethics are acquired human qualities, that is they are learned human habits that need a web of collaborators; we will emphasize on seeking to link theory to praxis so as to understand philosophy as a source of positive social transformation. The concept of practices will take an important place in the question of growth in virtues. Why so much practice? It is because moral theory is primary about actions and this is what relates to the concept of practice. Action cannot be seen purely in an abstract manner, must be seen in its practical context. MacIntyre's philosophy is that a «practice well done» would make people more virtues rather than less virtuous as it now does in our society.

The second chapter, perhaps the most profoundly central to the understanding of this discussion, deals with the question of the virtues; how the virtues influence rational action and affect the human good. We begin by recalling that man needs to learn to see himself as a practical reasoner with respect to goods, with respect to what is best to do on particular occasions, and with

respect to how best to live life. Without this it is impossible to achieve what MacIntyre calls flourishing and which, in short, is nothing other than what Aristotle calls eudaimonia, that is, the good life, and the virtuous life which is the end of all our moral activity.

The third and last chapter will be looking at what is considered as a proposal in order to bring about a growth in virtues in MacIntyre's view. MacIntyre proposes a teleological framework in which the virtues find their place and function¹⁸. According to the teleological framework actions are given intelligibility by the purpose or *telos* they seek to fulfill and man's life as a whole has meaning in so far as it is directed towards the *telos* of man. The main thoughts appearing in these proposals for the growth in virtues are mainly that: we need to reestablish some patterns of tradition informed by a quest for the good, we need to start a different way of life in which people work together in genuinely political communities to acquire the virtues and fulfill their innately human purposes. Moreover, human societies need to restore the essential concept of the *telos* and consider human life as a unity. It is because the virtues are considered as vehicles which help their possessors to reach the high good, which means that there is a connection between the virtues and the *telos* of human life.

In this third and last chapter, we have developed and deepened this great theme of the virtues, rediscovery of the good as the end of human actions and the measure of our rational action. In this third chapter we emphasize the important theme of the virtues relating them to the *telos* of human life and the community life by examining what MacIntyre calls structures of normality in which the concrete existence of concrete men unfolds. We insist on the relationship between the virtues and traditions and how these are related to and affect our understanding of the virtues. This chapter concludes giving a general view of MacIntyre of what can bring about a growth in the virtues.

In the Conclusions that close this work there is a fact that must be emphasized in order to properly appreciate the value of this work on MacIntyre's thought in order to grow in virtue. The tradition of virtues, it remains clear, disagrees with certain central features of modernity (the social, the economic

¹⁸ The virtues require a concept of self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death. The unity of a human life becomes invisible to us when a sharp separation is made between the individual and the roles one play in the society and this leads to understanding virtues as mere skills or talents.

orders) and in particular with its individualism. Then, here come the fact that the Aristotelian tradition can be reformulated in such a way as to restore rationality to our moral and social commitments. We need to set about seeking to build new forms of community within which moral life can continue in such a way that morality and civil life would survive these difficulties of the present modern age.

Lastly, in this introduction part, with a grateful heart I would like to give a vote of thanks to some individual persons and groups, who have been, from the start of this work, of great help spiritually and materially. In the first place I would like to thank His grace Renatus Leonard Nkwande, the archbishop of Mwanza-Tanzania, who allowed me an opportunity to spend more time studying in the University of Navarra. His encouragement during my realization of this academic work has been always comforting and supportive. I would like to thank him for his generously and fatherly follow-up in these last four years. He always needed to know how far I have gone in making further steps in my investigations and encouraged me to work even harder. Together with him, I give thanks to His Lordship Ignacio Munilla, the then bishop of San Sebastian (Spain) who, in agreement with my ordinary, accepted and welcomed me in his diocese and incorporated me in the pastoral work while realizing my studies. I am grateful too to the faithful of the parish of Our Lady of Aranzazu (Nuestra Señora de Aranzazu) Ventas-Irun, where I lived from the year 2018. These parishioners have lived and worked with me and gave me their support. The faculty of Ecclesiastical philosophy of the University of Navarra has been of immense help and guidance, particularly my director Prof. Dr. Fr. Sergio Sánchez-Migallón Granados with his fellows in the faculty of Ecclesiastical philosophy who always guided my writing and gave useful and technical instructions all the way up to the completions of this work. Finally, I thank all the people and colleagues who encouraged me and whose friendship with me always fueled my academic journey and enabled me to bring this investigation to this point. I would like thank all of them with heartfelt feelings.

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What MacIntyre proposes for the Growth in Virtues

After all that has been said in the previous sections, in this part we aim at focusing on what is proposed by MacIntyre in order to bring about a new and desirable human society, with a clear idea of the good that will lead its members to a growth in virtues. In order to look at his proposal with appreciation, we need first of all; to have an understanding of how he sees the modern times in comparison to the classical philosophers from whose philosophical reflections and thoughts MacIntyre looks at modernity and the modern moral philosophy with a very critical eye. MacIntyre contemplates the philosophical thought of the classics especially on Aristotle's theory of virtues, which is basically teleological, and comes out with a view that in the present age we urgently need to recover the Aristotelian ethical thought and build on that but with a present age's eye in order to improve the present. In his diagnosis of the condition of modern and more particularly of contemporary society, what is very clear in his thought is that it was a mistake to reject the teleological virtue theory, for according to him, without teleology, morality remain hanging, that is to say that, morality is left with no foundation on which to rest. So he will call upon an urgent social transformation, though he does not believe that this will happen easily. He warns that if this will not happen at all for the better of humanity, it will be a disaster¹.

We are well aware that what can bring about a fundamental social transformation or any fundamental change at an individual level, let us say a change in character and behavior in a human person is not something that can happen overnight. The truth of this is evident in the definition of virtue as by Aristotle's thought and is evident in all other cases of human experience in which

¹ Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 263.

we see that in order to make a step or two in any progress, be it natural or man-made; we need to invest very much in effort and time. This is one side of the coin, but the other side of the coin means that we always need to have some favorable conditions that will support us in our effort for a better end, or in the words of MacIntyre, to reach an innately human purpose. Since the environment is of great importance in our growth in the virtues and without a genuine community it becomes difficult to progress in virtues, we will now centre our discussion on MacIntyre's thought to grasp what he proposes. Modern moral philosophy and the modern life, and as a result the modern view of an individual, are of concern in MacIntyre's evaluation and suggestion². MacIntyre's critique of modernity is mainly centered on its lack of moral consensus in the society, lack of meaningful sense of purpose, and the break with the classical tradition which has led to the lack of social content and context when it comes to addressing moral issues. These features dominating the modern society makes him «believe that modern philosophy and modern life are characterized by the absence of any coherent moral code, and that the vast majority of individuals living in this world lack a meaningful sense of purpose in their lives and also lack any genuine community. He draws on the ideal of the Greek polis and Aristotle's philosophy to propose a different way of life in which people work together in genuinely political communities to acquire the virtues and fulfill their innately human purpose. This way of life is to be sustained in small communities which are to resist as best they can the destructive forces of liberal capitalism»³. In the deep thoughts of MacIntyre can be appreciated an effort to re-establish some patterns of tradition informed by a quest for the good. The acquired human qualities have an important place and role in enabling their possessors to spend all their lives inclined towards the achievement of their human good. Eliminate the telos of life and definitely you lose sense of the virtues in virtue of which humans spend their life making effort to attain⁴.

² Even already from the biological point of view, cf. MACINTYRE, A., *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, Open Court, Chicago, 1999; Duckworth, London, 1999.

³ CLAYTON, T., *Political philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre*, in FIESER, J., and DOWDEN, B. (eds.), *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://iep.utm.edu/p-macint/>

⁴ See also RODRÍGUEZ DUPLÁ, L., *Ética de la vida buena*, Desclee de Brouwer, Bilbao, 2006, pp. 63-78.

Morality, according to Alasdair MacIntyre, is not what it used to be. In the Aristotelian tradition of ancient Greece and medieval Europe, morality enabled the transformation from untutored human nature as it happened to be to human nature as it could be if it realized its telos, or in other words if it realized its fundamental goal. Eventually, belief in Aristotelian teleology waned, leaving the idea of imperfect human nature in conflict with the perfectionist aims of morality. The conflict dooms to failure any attempt to justify the claims of morality, whether based on emotion, such as Hume's was, or on reason, as in the case of Kant. The result is that moral discourse and practice in the contemporary world is hollow, lacking in content and context. Although the language and appearance of morality remains, the substance is no longer there. Disagreements on moral matters appeal to incommensurable values and so are interminable; the only use of moral language is manipulative, as MacIntyre contends.

1. THE VIRTUES AND THE TELOS OF HUMAN LIFE

The virtues as such are defined by MacIntyre in terms of the individual goods internal to practices but this way of looking at the virtues does not suffice and leaves this definition with some serious limitations and therefore he will propose that the virtues be furthermore defined as vehicles which help their possessors to reach the high good, the good of human life seen as a whole. At this stage comes in the question on 'how are the virtues connected with the good for man?' Together with their place within practices, the virtues are to be understood as having their function in enabling an individual to make of his or her life one kind of unity rather than another. The virtues are to be understood as having a close and natural relationship with the quest for the good⁵.

«The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for

⁵ In terms of this quest for the good MacIntyre will provide a provisional definition of the good life for man: «the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is». MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, p. 219.

the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good»⁶.

In considering the virtues and the roles played by these in the quest for the good it is of ultimate importance to present human life in the form of a narrative. The attempt to conceive of human life as a whole in contemporary times meets with the obstacle brought about by modernity which partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behavior. The consequences of this mode of thought is that life appears as nothing but a series of unconnected episodes and the self is liquidated into a set of demarcated areas of role-playing⁷. In this line of thought the actions one does are conceived of as something distinct rather than as part of a larger whole. Therefore the virtues are typically conceived of as synonymous with professional skills, but genuine virtues manifest in situations beyond their original practice and can only be evaluated in a person's life when that life is conceived of as a whole. So MacIntyre will call for a consideration of human life as a unity, the so called the narrative unity or account of human life in which man spends his life long journey seeking for the good for man helped by the necessary virtues, as MacIntyre defines the good life for man.

The modern view rejects the narrative mode of selfhood, but MacIntyre is of the opinion that to think of the self in a narrative mode is something natural because we are each the subject of our own personal history. If we don't consider human life as a unity it becomes impossible to give an intelligible account of our human actions. Although it seems that MacIntyre had rejected a version of Aristotelian ethical naturalism because of deep conflicts over what human flourishing consist in⁸, it nevertheless seem that he accepts it by proposing a socially teleological account of the virtues in terms of social practices, traditions and the narrative unity of a life⁹. He argues for an Aristotelian account of good as providing an authoritative standard, external to and independent of an agent's feelings, concerns, commitments and attitudes. According to this view what is good or virtuous is what conduces to ones

⁶ MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 219.

⁷ Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, p. 205.

⁸ Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

⁹ Cf., about this unity of life, LLANO, A., *La vida lograda*, Ariel, Barcelona, 2016.

flourishing as a human being, and what is bad or vicious is what conduces to the opposite¹⁰.

I think it is also very important to consider what Werner Jaeger says with regard to the origins of the education theory, the ways of educating and the environment he considers favorable for a healthy upbringing in the Greek society, and link this to what is MacIntyre's thought on what he calls the unity of the whole human life. In the educating process the main goal is to bring about the possible best of the person educated (formally or informally) by enlightening and showing the way, by broadening perspectives, etc. In order to reach the goal various ways are used and sometimes «both rewards and punishments are assigned by society to encourage the good qualities which can be learned by conscious effort»¹¹. The society is of greatest importance in the upbringing and education of all its members, the young and adults alike¹².

In most of our societies, specifically the African society of which I make part and of which by luck have a grain of knowledge as regards the ways through which the young are brought up and the society's peace and order are maintained, the whole community is responsible in the educational processes of its citizens. The young ones, from their early ages, are looked after by all adults, are formed in the ways of their parents and ancestors through a common understanding of the society's values and are considered together as sons and daughters of all. The tribe norms apply to all communally in such a way that all adult feel responsible in their implementation. This, in my view, is lost at the present ages. In many of the modern society's individuals we don't have a common understanding of the values. What things a considered 'values' in one place can be looked down in the other and total despised.

¹⁰ Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *Ethics in the conflict of modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative*, p. 32.

¹¹ JAEGER, W., *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, Vol. 1, p. 308.

¹² By the education and upbringing of adults here we mean to bring them on the ways accepted by all the others in the society on questions of morals in those cases in which one seems to go astray. There are some established social codes of behavior in which all the members of a particular society are urged to abide and walk, and the violation of one of these have severe and in most cases punishable consequences. The whole society takes charge of the safeguarding of these norms that keep the society united and at peace. I should put it clear that in some of our African societies we can still witness that the roles of educating and formation of its members is in the hands of all, such that children are brought up by all adults that form their particular society and environment. The formation of the young and the youth is a collective responsibility, all feel obliged to work together for the better of their future generation and negligence is never tolerated at all.

Abiding to the society's law is not always easy, and therefore there need to be law enforcers in order to reach or attain the desired results, that is, to see the role that law plays in education and formation of character. There are things we don't accept at first glance or we don't know and therefore we don't value until when we are helped and made to see them through learning and effort. Jaeger Werner is of the opinion that not only the justice of the state but the whole state is a wholly educational force. In the society we find the application of law, norms, the examples of good people in the society and sometimes the system of sanction, by which crimes are punished and virtues rewarded. Behind this is the conviction that «Civic virtue is the foundation of the state: without it, no community could possibly exist,»¹³ and therefore those who did not have had luck to have share of it were to be made to share in it through education, reprove and punishment until they improved. He points out on how both formal and informal education plays a major part in the formation of the human person.

«Protagoras points out that the whole life of every citizen is guided by educational influence from his birth up: nurse, mother, father, and pedagogue, all outdo one another in shaping the child's character by teaching and showing him the meaning of just and unjust, good and bad. With threats and punishments they try to straighten his soul out, as if it were a warping branch. Then he goes to school and learns orderly behavior, reading and writing, and playing the lyre»¹⁴.

At this point we see that there is a natural link between the individual, the formation process and the environment or the community involved and finally the roles each of these plays in bringing about a growth in an individual. One cannot progress in the virtues, in the proper sense of the term, if he or she is detached from the community of which he or she naturally forms part. All the activities one does has meaning and can be made intelligible in a particular human context and this is important at the moment of justifying human action and in conceiving of each human life as a unity. For MacIntyre, the advance in the virtuous life has to do with the total of all dealings in an individual life, but not without the knowledge of the good. Knowing the pur-

¹³ JAEGER, W., *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, Vol. 1, p. 309.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

pose of our existence makes us develop or cultivate the important instruments that will help us attain that end, that *telos*. So, the virtues become the vehicles which help us (the possessors of the virtues) to reach the high good informed by these acquired human qualities. We need to consider human life as a unity in order to be able to give an intelligible account of our human action.

The fifteenth chapter of *After Virtue* brings us an understanding that the self as conceived by the moderns cannot be looked at as bearer of the virtues as per Aristotle's conception of the virtues. The virtues in the Aristotelian sense¹⁵ are those acquire human qualities whose acquisition and exercise helps man to attain the *telos* of man. This becomes almost impossible to a self as conceived in our modern times because of what MacIntyre denominates as the separation between the individual and the roles one assumes in his or her social enactments in life. This modern tendency to separate the individual from the roles he or she plays loses the ground of social relationship in which the Aristotelian virtues function. The obvious confusion brought about by this modern tendency is that virtues, in the modernity, are not those conceived and spoken of by Aristotle but simply are «professional skills professionally deployed in those situations where they can be effective»¹⁶. This implies that in our modern times we speak of virtues to mean one thing and the classical authors speak of virtue meaning totally another thing from what the moderns have in mind. It is therefore impossible that the concept eluded to shares the one and same roles when it comes to showing how these virtues are to be considered as a vehicle to achieving the good for man.

There is an argument that has been maintained in MacIntyre's throughout. That is that moral concepts which originated and developed in a teleological framework, have been alienated and fragmented in contemporary moral philosophy to the point that understanding each human life as a unity or a whole is foreign to post-modern theories. Therefore there is a need to reintegrate moral concepts into this unified framework, showing both the limitations of contemporary theories and how a teleological framework overcomes these limitations. This will lead us to an Aristotelian conclusion that the virtues serve as an instrument that help and directs man to fulfill his purpose as

¹⁵ And also in the Thomist sense, cf. MACINTYRE, A., *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*, Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 1990.

¹⁶ *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 205.

man in his life. The most important question now is on how the virtues are connected with the good for man.

MacIntyre's concept of practice finds its good and proper place into the teleological framework that finds its source in Aristotle¹⁷. According to this thought actions are given intelligibility by the purpose or *telos* that they seek to fulfill and man's life as a whole has meaning insofar as it is directed toward the *telos* of man as such. This understanding is important when it comes to locating the place and functions of the virtues in enabling an individual to make of his or her life meaningful and directed to achieving the *telos* of man. According to MacIntyre, the virtues are to be situated within practice in order for there to be a *criteria* according to which man is to direct his life and action. He has the following to say in this regard: «... unless there is a *telos* which transcends the limited goods of practices by constituting the good of a whole human life, the good of a human life conceived as a unity, it will both be the case that a certain subversive arbitrariness will invade the moral life and that we shall be unable to specify the context of certain virtues adequately.»¹⁸ The preliminary definition of virtue¹⁹ that MacIntyre gives is based on practice and from this definition it remains clear that it is particularly through the virtues that we attain the goods internal to practice.

There should be therefore a point that connects the importance of our practice understood from the point of view of virtues and how these help us to attain our human *telos*. There are to be an overriding conception of the *telos* of a whole human life conceived as a unity in order that the individual virtues have meaning and save a purpose in our individual or communal actions. At this point we have to speak of the role of the virtues in the achievement of the goods internal to practice or the standards of excellence as MacIntyre sometimes calls them. We need to acquire some human qualities that we do not naturally possess in order to have the capacity to focus ourselves on that which is considered as the purpose of life and being. These acquired human qualities give meaning to our life and intelligibility to our actions.

¹⁷ Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas held that a virtue is a quality which enables an individual to move towards the achievement of the specifically human *telos*, whether natural or supernatural. Cf. MIRANDA, A., *An assessment of Alasdair MacIntyre's theory of virtue*, p. 1.

¹⁸ MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 203.

¹⁹ He defines a virtue as an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods. Cf. *After Virtue*, p. 191.

2. UNDERSTANDING THE NARRATIVE UNITY OF HUMAN LIFE

MacIntyre powerfully attacks both the Enlightenment liberalism and the postmodern response to the problems of the Enlightenment project objecting to the Enlightenment abstraction of man out of community and out of history²⁰. He accuses and rejects the fragmentation of the individual which is the typical problem of the postmodern response to the shortcomings of Enlightenment. The fifteenth chapter of *After Virtue* argues that man is a story-telling animal, that all life is a unified narrative embedded in several other narratives. MacIntyre associates the idea that life rambles with the postmodern fracturing of society and of the individual, which he finds destructive to the concept of virtue. Virtue, writes MacIntyre, requires a «concept of a self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end.» «The unity of a human life becomes invisible to us,» he explains, «when a sharp separation is made... between the individual and the roles that he or she plays.» In other words, postmodern society fragments human life: «work is divided from leisure, private life from public; the corporate from the personal childhood and old age have been wrenched away from the rest of human life and made over into distinct realms.» The fractured individual then begins to speak of the virtues of a good banker, the virtues of a good student, or the virtues of a good artist, and the meaning of virtue devolves from the Aristotelian concept of excellence of character as a whole to mere skill or talent. To restore the Aristotelian concept of virtue, MacIntyre wants to restore the idea of life as a unified narrative. He therefore speaks of the narrative unity of human life and insists on the «concomitant concept of selfhood, a concept of self whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links bit to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end»²¹. He opines that if we take a scrutiny of some of most taken for granted insights about human nature and selfhood we will get to know that thinking of the self in a narrative mode in something that is natural.

Against the spirit of his time, therefore, MacIntyre insists on the unity of human life and the importance of understanding each life as embedded in

²⁰ Cf. GIMÉNEZ AMAYA, J. M., *La universidad en el proyecto sapiencial de Alasdair MacIntyre*, pp. 137-150.

²¹ MACINTYRE, A., *After virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 205.

several contexts. «The narrative of any one life is part of an interlocking set of narratives,» he argues, adding that «the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity.»²² «I am born with a past,» MacIntyre affirms, «and to try to cut myself from that past in the individualist mode is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide.»²³ Some of these interlocking, embedded narratives constitute a «setting,» which MacIntyre defines as an «institution,» «practice,» or «milieu of some other human kind.» «A setting has a history,» he writes, «a history in which the histories of individual agents not only are, but have being situated.» «Without the setting and its change through time,» warns MacIntyre, «the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible.»²⁴

3. VIRTUES AND TRADITIONS IN RELATION WITH OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE VIRTUE

What comes next in our consideration is to clarify the question on the relationship there is when it comes to considering virtues, practice and traditions in order to bring about a progress in our human growth. Then, it is important to recall the emphasis made by MacIntyre that all practices have histories. Understanding what a practice is depends on how the particular practice has been understood over generations. Moreover, he explains that the development and transmission of practices constitute traditions and the traditions do not exist in isolation but are situated within larger social traditions²⁵. This brings us to the understanding that traditions are born in a social setting and context in which the practices have their stories. Thus, those acquired human qualities are, without doubt, obtained or acquired at the moment of particular practices of whatever kind but within a particular social context. An individual's search for the goods which are internal to practices, or the good of a single life, is generally and characteristically conducted within a context de-

²² MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, p. 218.

²³ MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, p. 221.

²⁴ MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

²⁵ Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, p. 221.

fined by those traditions of which the life of the individual is a part²⁶. This will evidently lead to a conclusion that «Once again the narrative phenomenon of embedding is crucial...»²⁷, in the exact words of Alasdair MacIntyre.

The effort we make in seeking the good or in the exercise of the virtues is not a one man's show; that is to say that we are not able to seek the good or exercise the virtues only qua individual. «A careful consideration of MacIntyre's thought reveals that the reflection on the significant of traditions, on how they affect our understanding of the virtues²⁸, and on how they are related to what it means for us to be human, practically forms the substance of MacIntyre's philosophical reflection»²⁹. So the concept of tradition becomes central in the MacIntyrean definition of the virtues whereby the virtues are defined in terms of their relation to traditions which provide both practices and individual lives with their necessary historical context.

Against the stand point of modern individualism which asserts that each individual is what he or she chooses to be and consequently detaching an individual from his or her social environment, the ethical framework of MacIntyre and his conviction brings us the understanding that each person approaches his or her own circumstances with both the historical background of his or her society or social circumstances and also with a particular social identity which is given to us by a web of relationships we are involved in and by the number of social roles we play in the society. This is evidenced by our social titles that identify us as sons of or daughters of, our citizenship in a certain city or nation or sometimes our professions. Every one of these roles comes with its own set of debts and inheritances from the past and entails a variety of obligations, and right and duties. «Every individual besides having a social identity of some kind or the other also possesses a historical identity. By historical identity he means that every individual life has a story which is embedded in the story

²⁶ Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

²⁷ MACINTYRE, A., *ibid.*, p. 222.

²⁸ RODRIGUEZ D. L., writing on the nature of the ethical virtues, reminds us of the Aristotelian notion that the actions by which virtue is acquired are not properly virtuous actions, but actions externally resembling virtuous ones. The child who is forced by his elders to carry out these actions will carry them out mechanically, perhaps only to avoid punishment. But over time, the moral lucidity that would allow him to carry out these actions motivated by the clear awareness of his intrinsic nobility will awaken in him. (See *Ética*, Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid, 2001, p. 277.)

²⁹ MIRANDA, A., *An Assessment of Alasdair MacIntyre's theory of Virtue*, p. 93.

of the group of community of which he or she is a part and within which he or she plays a role. The social identity and historical identity coincide, says MacIntyre, and together give each individual life its moral particularity»³⁰. It is from these basic and essential backgrounds that our way of thinking and acting take way, and also our moral particularity will be significantly determined and defined by such social background and historical identity.

4. UNDERSTANDING THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

What we find at the MacIntyrean virtue theory is an understanding that virtue is not something we acquire automatically by virtue of our humanity but that the virtues are inculcated in us through life process. We therefore need to learn from the others, and such a learning we can best be understood as individuals in the social circumstances. As we said previously, our actions are intelligible when contextualized. «In the Aristotelian tradition, the subject matter of moral philosophy is human action. MacIntyre's virtuous agent is a protagonist in history; like Jane Austen, the virtuous agent refuses to conform to debasing social customs... the virtuous agent seeks to transcend the conventional and the traditional and to struggle for progress in the pursuit of truth. Where conventional modern moral philosophy thwarted human desire, MacIntyre holds that virtue enables agents to educate their desires so that they may pursue their goals more effectively. MacIntyre's agent becomes virtuous by learning to recognize what is good and best to do and by developing moral habits that allow her or him to follow through on good judgments, even when doing so demands difficult choices and the rejection of dominant ways of thinking»³¹.

All human life is a journey that consists of, in most cases, discovery and acquisition of new knowledge and improvement of the previously gained experiences. In our life we grow physically but also we grow in the knowledge of

³⁰ MIRANDA, A., *ibid.*, p. 94.

See also his own insistence on this point as he confirms that: the story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide. Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, pp. 220-221.

³¹ LUTZ, C. S., *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's «After Virtue»*, pp. 149-150.

the new things and we acquire new understanding, customs, traditions and get in contact with new cultures that enrich our knowledge and life. The world is full of resourceful people (individuals) and rich cultures and traditions. All these are put at our disposal and we can get use of them always we need to, and whenever we think it is convenient and makes any benefit for us at an individual level or at a community level. Learning positive social aspects from other people's civilizations never has been considered a crime. A number of opportunities are offered to us and the many learning chances we happen to get can be well utilized for the betterment of an individual or the whole society. It is evident, therefore, that we are offered a number of possibilities that help and finally make us «grow» in the widest sense of the term through learning. In the learning and through learning we find the origin of our own ideas, the later development of such ideas and finally the potential transmission of the new ideas which we know.

Apart from getting in contact with other cultures and traditions, apart from the formal education that contribute greatly to what we are at the present; outside the learned civilizations, literature, tradition and education, and outside the many discoveries one could make in his life outside the natural environment (geographical places of birth), we have what we can call «the mother culture», that culture in which we are born and in which we grow. This is like something that we inherit or «suck» from our mothers or fathers in the first stages of our growth, in the early physical-mental development. These are things that are in the roots of our identity and general we can say that we are culturally made of these first human experiences. A little child learns from the parents³². Moreover, the little ones learn from the brothers and sisters of the same family and others of their own a number of things that slowly make them what they are at adult-

³² From the very early age careful parents teach their children the fundamentals of ethics though with no technical – serious formal language. The content of what is taught by the parents at this moment, regardless of the differences in cultures and traditions, is almost the same throughout all human community. That is why any new human community you encounter will in a certain way reflect these 'commons' in a certain way. In this way the child grows with a sense of some ethical concepts like good and bad, right and wrong, justice, love, honor, equality and many others. Meet any family anywhere you will hear or see the child is instructed to greet or say thank you.

R. Spaemann reminds that «this is because the starting point for moral philosophy was the need, in view of the different sorts of customs to be found in different societies, to try to establish what actually is natural to man. It was thought that the only way for a man to be free was for him to act in accordance with his nature». SPAEMANN, R., *Basic moral concepts*, p. 9.

hood and counted as one of the dependable members of their family and society when it comes to assuming general family and social responsibilities like security, parenthood, etc. These primarily learnt lessons and experiences are things like greeting, good manners and respect to the adults and fellows, friendship and the resulting relations with friends, the social behaviors of their own people and other things of such a nature specific to a certain social group. From the very early ages of our childhood we can still remember how our parents used to insist us on learning good behavior at the moment we went out to join and play with our fellows and friends; «take care and avoid joining bad friends»³³, although at that moment it would be not easy to know what they exactly meant with such advices and prohibitions. On getting back at home we would do a kind of «reporting back» and sharing our experiences with our parents, especially when we had seen or heard someone insulting or misbehaving in the street or among our friends, against what the parents taught us at home. These advices from the parents or teachers, and other many similar warnings form part of our early formation from our parents and others around us. This reflects an effort to establish what actually is ‘natural’ to man, an effort to help the child live a meaningful and good life. It is the social settings and circumstances that shape us and from the mirror of the social circumstances we can see our life.

At the end of it all, we learn that we are defined by these early guidelines, these familiar and social circumstances and the later human, academic, spiritual and moral formation. We can be better defined and understood on the basis of our background and from the early formation that we received from our own families and social environments. Some few examples can make more sense in exemplifying what is meant by this affirmation. The social community activities in which people get involved include pastoralism, people involved in agriculture or fishing industry, traditional art craft like weaving, and many others of the nature. These are some of the socio-economic activities a people get involved – in in order to generate something for commercial purposes and for domestic consumption. Some families have tribe leaders, those who take charge of guiding the whole clan or tribe members for a smooth running and order. These family or social activities mode us in some moral aspects like

³³ The adjective «bad» implies that there are also friends who are «good» and worthy of joining. More education is then necessary in order to get more human formation that will make us well informed of that which makes some friends bad and others good.

courage, perseverance, faithfulness, etc. It is more likely to discover a certain behavioral trait in a child whose roots has much to do with these activities and a particular social background of his family and society.

An important aspect of our human life and growth comes evident in our present argument as this argument takes us to the idea that the social linked aspect or the social circumstances have an important and unavoidable place in our 'making' as humans. «For MacIntyre, the isolated individual who is left to seek the good life alone is a person adrift. That isolated individual is every bit unlikely to succeed...in the task of finding the good life as the citizen of a tyrannical collectivist state, whose freedom of agency is smothered by the tendency to discuss freedom only in the political terms of the tension between individualism and collectivism»³⁴. We learn a number of things through imitation and only later on develop our own objective interest while acknowledging the universal standards. Through imitation we come to learn and know things of great importance in our existence from the very first instances of our life. This crucial moral aspect puts it clear that in order to have an objective and successful living we need the other human beings; we specifically need the presence of the family or society from which we learn right and wrong, good and bad according to the already established standards of right living. A community of equals, the society is irreplaceable when it comes to the search of the aspects of right and successful living. In his excellent introduction to the book on ethical thinking and the questions on the role of the individual in society, R. Spaemann brings this idea to the peak as he concludes that «It is not possible to be a human being without others»³⁵. This reveals that an individual is better seen in his/her true 'color' when is socially linked or when one reflects himself/herself in and through the mirror of the human family and in and through the social circumstances. It is the society that can better reflect the image of who we are or what we ought to be, and in the society we live our life struggling with effort to make sure that our behavior and actions, at least to some extent, are meaningful to others. The society is our reference and deprived of the society we are turned «poor» individuals.

A little reflection of the African society can suffice to give more sense of this crucial aspect. Among the many values (positive values and fundamental el-

³⁴ LUTZ, C. S., *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's «After Virtue»*, p. 152.

³⁵ SPAEMANN, R., *Basic Moral Concepts*, p. 35.

ements of an African anthropology) an African child is taught in the family and outside it, many human values such as the value for life, humanism, hospitality, the sense of human relations, sense of the community, and respect to the authority of the elders. Others important values include the value of marriage, family, art and music, generosity, among others. The sense of community for example, brings with it solidarity among family and community/society members, respect to the authority especially the authority of the elders, joy and the sense of priority to human relations and human values. Generosity and hospitality are among the African values which recognize the human dignity of the others. These and some more others are all found deep in the society in such a way that outside those who live a «practice» it becomes difficulty to inherit them. So, sharing a tradition by living the same narrative unity of life participating in a practice is in no way irreplaceable in order to bring about a growth in the virtues. This confirms our point that when we are deprived of the society we are left «poor». This sort of poverty can be expressed in other words as uncultured individuals. We cannot understand the ‘ways of our own’ if not inserted in our own social reality. Living a social tradition, therefore, is of great importance for us in order to be assigned a proper place in a particular society and for us to have a correct moral consciousness proper to a specific social group.

As we have pointed early in the previous chapters, this way of looking and relating of an individual and society is alien to the moderns. But we need to understand that an individual, who gets actively involved in an activity in the society, does not lose anything but gains immensely in what he does. Resilience and intentional participation are keys in order to bring about success. Insisting on the MacIntyrean analyses of practice Craig Dykstra gives us an example of how theological education can be bettered through a communal participation against the individualistic mode of doing things of interest to all and reminds that practice contribute to our identity. Such a participation of all members brings about sensitivity in the participants as regards to what is good³⁶ in that particular practice.

³⁶ See the importance B. J. Kallenberg gives on the role of a practice: «The goods of a practice cannot be seen from the outside (that is, from the side of trifiers and other nonplayers). The goods of a practice can be seen only from the inside, from the side of the practitioner. Therefore, far from being an abstract enterprise, theology is a very practical exercise whose good is nothing less than a way of life. As this good has been championed by each generation of Christians and handed down from one generation to the next, conversation with our theological forebears is

«The salient features of this alternative contrast strikingly with the received account. First, the theologian-as-practitioner does not aim primarily at unilateral dissemination of information. Rather, when theological education is understood in terms of MacIntyrean practice, what comes into view is a complex interplay of human activity that depends upon intentional participation of parishioners as well as pastors, students as well as professors, and the engagement of all with voices from their common history. This way of putting things illustrates the narrative weave of the Christian community in which individual life stories intersect in such practices of worship, witness, and theological education»³⁷.

An exploration into Alasdair MacIntyre's perspective on virtue and its implication for character education leads us to experiencing and learning his study experience, the origins of his thoughts and critical arguments. These contents are the background to understand his perspective on virtue. Although he points out that the concepts of virtues are not invariable, he still argues that it could be understood comprehensively through three stages³⁸ which include practice, the narrative unity of a single life and tradition. In his consideration of the self, rather than focusing on formal properties of what it is to be a person, MacIntyre move his attention to questions about the modern identity, questions about the beliefs and values that constitute who we are. To develop a narrative conception of the self is to draw attention to the extent to which our identity is shaped with others³⁹ and by others.

essential to our understanding of what human life is all about. Another way of making this same point is to say that Christian tradition is a narratively extended quest for a singular *telos*». In MURPHY, N., KALLENBERG, B. J., NATION, M. Th. (eds.), *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre*, p. 162.

³⁷ DYKSTRA, C., «Reconceiving Practice in Theological Enquiry and Education» in MURPHY, N., KALLENBERG, B. J., NATION, M. Th. (eds.), *Virtues and Practice in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics after MacIntyre*, pp. 161-162.

³⁸ Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, pp. 186-187.

³⁹ This view opposes Rawls thought which insists on a separation of the public and the private person and relegates comprehensive conceptions of the good and commitments to ultimate ends to the private realm. MacIntyre is against this view and looks at an individual with a different opinion: «Any contemporary attempt to envisage each human life as a whole, as a unity, whose character provides the virtues with an adequate *telos* encounters two different kinds of obstacle, one social and one philosophical. The social obstacles derive from the way in which modernity partitions each human life into a variety of segments, each with its own norms and modes of behavior. So work is divided from leisure, private life from public, and the corporate from the personal. So both childhood and old age have been wrenched away from the rest of human life and made over into distinct realms. And all

Seen from this perspective, the teleological view of man should not have had been rejected. Moreover, he indicates that there some dimension which are necessary for human beings to become independent practical reasoners since human beings are with animality. In the first place they need to be able to evaluate their actions, they need learn to postpone satisfying their desires and learn to know the future. This is because any independent practical reasoner sets common good as the reason of his or her actions. To achieve common good of human society, one must understand it as a question of a giving and receiving society. From this perspective MacIntyre speaks of other necessary and accompanying virtues like justice and generosity.

The various practices⁴⁰ and their goods, MacIntyre tells us, must be ordered in two ways. They must be ordered within the community; and here MacIntyre appeals to the architectonic practice of politics in an Aristotelian sense.⁴¹ And they must be ordered within the life of the individual person, and here MacIntyre appeals to traditions, which are historically extended rational inquiries into the good human live, and which are socially embodied in institutions, practices and practitioners⁴². «The story of my life is always embedded in the story of those communities from which I derive my identity. I am born with a past; and to try to cut myself off from that past, in the individualist mode, is to deform my present relationships. The possession of an historical

these separations have been achieved so that it is the distinctiveness of each and not the unity of the life of the individual who passes through those parts in terms of which we are taught to think and to feel». MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, p. 204.

«... Equally the unity of a human life becomes invisible to us when a sharp separation is made either between the individual and the roles that he or she plays... or between the different role-and quasi role-enactments of an individual life so that life comes to appear as nothing but a series of unconnected episodes». MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 204

⁴⁰ T. D'Andrea gives us an insight into MacIntyre's concern on moral theory and the origins of the term practice as he says that, «The principle problems of contemporary moral theory are found in the proposals of moral emotivism and intuitionism, theories MacIntyre brands as the inheritors of the Enlightenment tradition. (See: MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Edition, University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, p. 114). He therefore focuses on how to conduct ethical inquiry. In dealing with this he brings in the relation of the concept of practice; namely, moral theory is primarily about action. He argues that action cannot be seen purely in an abstract manner but rather must always be seen in its practical context. Hence, there is a relation between action and practical problem-solving. To forget this is to miss a key aspect of moral theory drastically and fatally separating it from lived moral experience. This theory-praxis relation is a central concern in MacIntyre's philosophy. Cf. D'ANDREA, T., *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue: The Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre*, p. 4.

⁴¹ See MACINTYRE, A., *Whose Justice? Whose Rationality?*, p. 47 and 107.

⁴² Cf. MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, pp. 222-223.

identity and the possession of a social identity coincide»⁴³. The progression of an individual's pursuit of their goods that MacIntyre portrays for us – from our starting point in a family situation onwards through practices, civil society and on to adherence to a tradition is, in itself, a growth of the persons themselves in the midst of social life. Growth in virtues as per MacIntyre's thought is not a question of «one man's show» but a question of an individual's social integration and learning diligently from those who have preceded us in the practice⁴⁴. Prior to the advent of modernity, people understood themselves as essentially belonging to various communities. This concrete place within a set of social relations largely defined a person's moral obligations. These characteristics were not something that human beings could shake off to discover their real selves. People are fundamentally social persons (political animals) and in the absence of this particular place in certain groups, such persons are nobodies, they are outsiders. This natural belonging to certain groups and institutions does not imply a denial of what today we would call social mobility, but constitutes the necessary aid for people to be able to orient themselves towards the true telos of human beings. This way of understanding people ceased to be practices at some point in the so called 'progress towards modernity'.

CONCLUSION

The ethical theory developed by Alasdair MacIntyre intends to understand ethics and human action from the perspective of virtues, because without the virtues the goods internal to human action are barred to us. We need

⁴³ MACINTYRE, A., *After Virtue*, 3rd Ed., University of Notre Dame Press, 2007, pp. 220-221.

⁴⁴ «To enter into a practice is to enter into a relationship not only with its contemporary practitioners, but also with those who have preceded us in the practice, particularly those whose achievements extended the reach of the practice to its present point. It is thus the achievement, and *a fortiori* the authority, of a tradition which I then confront and from which I have to learn. And for this learning and the relationship to the past which it embodies the virtues of justice, courage and truthfulness are prerequisite in precisely the same way and for precisely the same reasons as they are in sustaining present relationships within practices». *After Virtue*, p. 194. Moreover, MacIntyre offers his fully developed definition of practice in *After Virtue* where he says the following: «By a 'practice' I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended». See p. 187.

to rediscover and understand well the virtues in order to reorient our human life and make a proper use of these acquired human qualities to improve our moral standards of life. In this work we have treated generally a reflection on our society in the views of Alasdair MacIntyre in order to have a glance on what challenges it faces, how they have come about and what could be the way to get out of such moral difficulties; and we have come to the understanding that the virtues enable the pursuit of the good life intended for every human being. Our interest has been to emphasize the place of virtues in human formation against the morality built on rules and principles as reflected in the modern moral philosophy. The virtues, those acquired human qualities enable a person to do well in his life. We have come to the knowledge that the rules should be considered as means towards a moral state and not the end or purpose of a moral state.

MacIntyre is, without any doubt, one of the most influential moral philosophers of our time and a true renovator of moral philosophy; he also stands out as one of the greatest representatives of the so-called philosophical communitarianism. His greatest merit, however, lies in his rediscovery, or return, to the Aristotelian moral tradition first and his subsequent adherence to the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas. It is on these bases that he founds his argument for a virtues centered ethical theory. A virtues centered theory of ethics requires an acceptable view of the human good which will enable us to show how morality can be explicated in terms of character traits that are indispensable or useful for the attainment of the human good. We have shown in this work that perhaps because it is so difficult to find such a view of the good, the virtues have not occupied a central position in the modern moral philosophy. Following the failure of the enlightenment project to find or conceive an independent and more rational justification of morality they resorted to passion, to rules as the basic foundation of morals. And this leads us to affirm that the purpose of MacIntyre's virtues centered morality is to ground morality on a more plausible constitutive notion than that of rule or principles after the failure of the enlightenment.

The return to the insistence on the virtues is of greatest merit to MacIntyre and, needless to say, very important because of the undeniable fact that contemporary culture with its conflicts and difficulties is the result of a rupture of modernity with respect to the classical moral tradition which has affected mainly the way of conceiving and understanding morals. The moral crisis starts with the rise of protestant thought when people began to think that

human reason, having been destroyed by sin could not give any understanding of human nature or of its ultimate end. Later on modern science and philosophy, essentially ant-Aristotelian, rejected any theological vision of the cosmos and of human nature. They rejected any understanding of man as possessing any essence that defines his true end. Consequently, from this perspective, any conception of ethics consisting in enabling man to pass from his present state to his true end is invalidated. Now, because the human essence cannot be known, the human end, the *telos* of human life cannot be known either.

It is from the rejection of Aristotelianism that we can understand the origin, not of all, certainly, but of most of the evils that afflict and challenge us today. The rejection of Aristotelianism did not leave us safe. Two obvious consequences of the rejection of Aristotelianism were the following; first that it became impossible to give a rational justification of morality and secondly, morality itself ceases to have a coherent relation to the nature of the humans it was intended to guide.

One of the most sensitive points of this rupture is what we can summarize as the change, on the part of the practical sciences, of the notion of the good. In this way it is understood how ethics has displaced from its horizon the *telos*, that is, the end of human actions (a question on which MacIntyre insists so much in his moral philosophy) and, consequently, politics as the culmination of ethics remains today alien to any idea of a temporal common good, with which it has been reduced to a simple praxis of power for the sake of power itself.

All this translates into a true crisis of practical reason as one of the characteristics of the present time. MacIntyre has placed his sharp eye precisely on this point: man today has lost his capacity and one might even say his own conscience as a practical reasoner: this is the origin of what MacIntyre aptly calls the contemporary emotivism that afflicts, transversally, the entire existence of man in our time. In the three chapters we have treated in this work we have attempted to give an exposition of the views of MacIntyre on modernity in the first place, then we have discussed extensively on what is virtue or what are the virtues and their place and roles in the education or formation of humans and lastly we have explained on the proposals given in the MacIntyrean scheme for the growth in virtues.

In the first chapter we have exposed MacIntyre's vision of the contemporary moral culture, that our culture is in a serious crisis with respect to morality since the substance of morality has been destroyed in our societies.

The moral terms and language we use in our moral discourses is employed out of context. We possess, as MacIntyre says, simulacra of morality. Many of the words that inform our daily moral discourse were originally integrated in bodies of theory, that is in a theoretically founded conception of what man is and what his destiny is, that arose in a certain social context in which they found their fullest meaning. In the modern moral culture such moral notions are now uprooted from those original contexts that gave them meaning and consequently the same notions tell us very little or they tell us nothing at all when employed in the moral sphere. This leads to the conclusion that the moral culture of modernity is, in MacIntyre's view, a culture of endless disagreements in which parts cannot solve their differences by arguments because they rely on radically different presuppositions about the problems and issues in question. These differences cannot be judged by the same standards, have no common standards of measurement.

The second chapter dug deep in the notion of virtue in the classical terms and meaning and has explored its function in bringing man to his *telos*. The classical or the pre-modern moral scheme is essentially teleological and in this moral scheme there is a contrast between what man is and what man could be if he were to realize his essential nature. The moral scheme of the pre-modern culture had a view that man is in an inadequate state and therefore he is in need of transformation. In this view, therefore, ethics would be considered as a study that shows men the way to make the transition from the first state to the second, that of «man as he could be». It determines what the human *telos* is and what are the precepts and virtues that must be fulfilled and acquired to reach such *telos*. This moral scheme is founded on the conviction that our understanding is capable of knowing human nature and *telos*. The good human life will then seek to embody the ultimate end in everyday practices. It is from here that MacIntyre argues that the virtues provide the indispensable excellences and character from which the human *telos* can be attained.

Following the same line of thought we have given, therefore, the MacIntyrean notion of virtue. For him the virtues are those dispositions of character and understanding that enable us to attain the true goods of our species. They are qualities whose possession will make a person capable of attaining eudaimonia, the true human good. The virtues are not a mere instrument or a mere means to the good life, but are an essential and necessary part of the good life. Without the virtues there is no eudaimonia. If there is virtue a person feels good, chooses good and acts good, which is why the virtues are defined as

dispositions to feel in a particular way because they create a kind of a second nature in a person.

The third chapter has allowed us to discuss on what proposes MacIntyre for the growth in the virtues. Since we have established an argument that in order to reach the desired *telos* of the human life the virtues are indispensable, we saw it crucial to specify to what will help us to cultivate a virtuous state. In the first place we need to reestablish some patterns of traditions informed by a quest of the good. This is because in the absence of such patterns of traditions there will be missing the essential connection between the actions humans do and the purpose they aim to achieve. In this point we have seen that the virtues have something to do with the *telos* of human life. This awareness will help us to live our life conscious of our desired human end. The virtues are considered as vehicles which help their possessor to reach the high good. They are dispositions which sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices and which will sustain and furnish us with increasing knowledge of the good.

Secondly, we have to start a different way of life in which people work together in genuinely political communities to acquire the virtues and fulfill their innately human purposes. This will be a kind of life different from the manipulative social relations of the emotivism which is a type of life not informed by morality. This new way of life will be a non-manipulative relationship in which no one treats the others as means to our ends, as an instrument for our purposes. In a genuinely political community, a community in which the relationships are informed by morality, members of the community offer their fellows good reasons for them to act in one way and not in another, that is to say, that they offer them objective, impersonal criteria for action and they give the others the possibility to evaluate these reasons for themselves, to submit them to their own judgment. Morality is, therefore, based on a plausible justification in such a way that when it becomes necessary to share or transmit such moral understanding to the other it is always and all over an easy job.

In the third place we have seen that it is very important to make all the necessary and important efforts for restoring the essential concept of the *telos*. In this regard, MacIntyre proposes a socially teleological account to the virtues in terms of social practices, traditions and the narrative unity of life because for MacIntyre the growth in virtues has to do with all what one does in his life. According to the teleological framework, actions are given intelligibility by the purpose or *telos* they seek to fulfill and man's life as a whole has meaning in-

sofar as it is directed towards the telos of man. Therefore the virtues are to be situated within practice in order for there to be a criteria according to which man is to direct his life and actions. Lastly, it is high time that we reconsider human life as a unity because if we don't consider human life as a unity it becomes impossible to give an intelligible account of our human actions.

Against the modern individualism, in this work we have shown that it is important to look at self from the perspective of the community for it is the integration in the society that reveals the so called social identity, an aspect on which MacIntyre puts emphasis. Understanding the individual in the social link or social circumstances is crucial because as a person an individual carries with him his communitarian roles as part of the definition of his person. We have clarified that in the classical tradition to be a human being is to play a series of social roles and therefore, it is possible to call someone good or bad, since it can be verified factually whether or not he fulfills what his functions demand. Only through the fulfillment of his social roles does the individual attain the specifically human goods. So, we face the world as members of this family, of this religious community or members of this city etc., and there is no other way of being a person outside of all this. I have to seek the human good always as part of a community. Therefore, what is good for me is, to a large extent, what is good for whoever inhabits those roles. Social identity makes me heir to a set of duties and obligations. These constitute the prior data of my life, my moral starting point. For MacIntyre to attempt to detach myself from my past in an individualistic way is to deform my present relations.

According to our discussion in this work we have come to a conclusion that our present society's culture is almost an emotivist culture. We live in a specifically emotivist culture because ordinary people often think that claims of objectivity in moral judgments are unjustified. Now days a wide variety of our modes of conduct, at least in the realm of our everyday practices, presuppose our acceptance of emotivism. Today people think, speak and act to a large extent as if emotivism were true. Emotivism is incorporated into our culture and this marks a serious cultural loss.

The way out of this crisis is none other than a return to what MacIntyre has identified as the neo-Aristotelian tradition, making the legacy of the tradition alive and current. MacIntyrean proposal goes at vindicating a rational action which can be defended as a life option in the face of the currently prevailing emotivist modes.

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