*Piotr Machura*

# MacIntyre's Radical Intellectualism: The Philosopher as a Moral Ideal

*Abstract:* The question I address in the paper is "What is the ideal of MacIntyre's moral philosophy? What is the *telos* of human nature?" Considering MacIntyre's critique of modern culture, politics and philosophy, anti-intellectualism emerges as the main reason for his refutation of these values. So is it a reason for moral and political distortion that leads to the interpassivity of the modern self. Taking into account MacIntyre's idea of *characters* I pinpoint the *character* of the philosopher as a moral ideal of MacIntyre's thought. For it is not only intellectual activity within any practice that enables us to develop our distinctively human nature but also philosophy that is the highest form of that kind of activity. From this point of view, it is crucial to grasp philosophy as a required way of life *and* the *craft* that enables us to be moral and political agents.

## 0. Introduction

The question I address in the present paper is "What is the ideal of MacIntyre's moral philosophy? What is the *telos* of human nature?" If MacIntyre's critique of modernity is something more than just a form of resentment, what should we recognize as the core of the critique? And finally—can we find in MacIntyre's thought some kind of a basis for both political and personal solutions that would overcome the poverty of the modern self? I shall argue that we should point to intellectualism as a primary constituent of the basis.

My argument is threefold: I start with some general remarks about the idea of moral ideals and personal examples and, simultaneously, with a presentation of MacIntyre's concept of *character*. Then using that concept I will pinpoint the common basis of MacIntyre's critique of modernity. And finally I will present the idea of the moral example (the ideal) which emerges form MacIntyre's conception.

## 1. Moral Ideals as Forms of Moral Consciousness

The fundamental query that I think needs to be raised is: "Why should we reconsider moral ideals?" It seems, as Susan Wolf notes, that "a moral theory that does not contain the seeds of an all-consuming ideal of moral sainthood thus seems to place false and unnatural limits on our opportunity to do moral good

and our potential to deserve moral praise" (Wolf 1982, 433) and it does so, we can add, to our descriptive and normative possibilities in ethics. An analysis of human acting which confines its classification to the wrong/right distinction only seems to be too narrow, not only because it passes over what is between these two judgements but also because it does not take into account heroic actions.

As J. O. Urmson claims, there are, however, at least five reasons for which what he calls "a moral code" should distinguish between basic norms and 'higher flights of morality' (Urmson 1958, 211–214). First, taking into account the impoverishment of moral life in which neither saints nor heroes can show up, he emphasizes those crucial matters "in which compliance with the demands of morality by all is indispensable" (211). Second, due to this distinction, a difference between fundamental and supererogatory actions emerges to the extent that it becomes possible to justly enforce the basic social norms. Third, as Urmson says: "a moral code, if it is to be a code, must be formulable, and if it is to be a code to be observed it must be formulable in rules of manageable complexity" (212). Those rules should be easy to interpret for an ordinary person. We can also add that it is one of the reasons for which the personal example is the most common form of the presentation of 'higher flights of morality'. Fourth, this distinction should be introduced so that one will know which norms are required to be obeyed and which norms are only expected to be obeyed. And fifth, this distinction enables us to formulate an encouragement to perform the best possible action which is not necessarily derived from the norms that restrict us.

It is important to notice that Urmson searches for the meaning of the terms "saint" and "hero" in some especially desirable forms of conduct. These forms, however, cannot be considered in separation from a person's character. For the category of supererogatory actions does not describe any particular kind of action, but only some isolated actions which transcend the norm. For that reason this category of actions is usless for normative ethics.

If we want then to find any space for the 'higher flights of morality' in normative ethics, we should invoke to the idea of essential perfection. It is not an objective of mine to analyse this conception in detail.[1] It is crucial, however, to notice, as Felix Adler did, that the idea of moral perfection, that is, of the ideal, can appear in moral thinking in two fundamental ways. First, it takes the form of "the idea of a non-existent thing, or state or being, or mode of conduct regarded as worthy of being realised" (Adler 1910, 387). This is how we imagine ideal happiness or ideal justice. Second, "we may think of ideal as an object in which the desired perfection, whatever it be, is realized already" (Adler 1910, 387). In other words, we can analyse either the nature of some particular value in its entirety or fulfilment of the moral code typical of a particular community or normative conception, embodied in an all-consuming example. Jesus is an example of this kind of ideal which represents the fulfilment of Christianity.

It is crucial, however, to add to this two further points. First, our mode of enquiry must be able to take into account both basic norms which an ordinary imperfect human can obey in everyday life and heroic deeds which characterize

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[1] See e.g. Aristotle's definition of perfection in *Metaphysics* 6, 16.

Urmson's (1958) 'higher flights of morality'. Impossibility to distinguish between these two levels of the 'moral code' must lead to an overbearing fanatic vision of morality or to a significant decrease in moral demands. Without specifying the uppermost limit to our requirements, we are not able to say what *must* be done. Second, what follows from the above is that an idea of that kind must include an anthropological conception of incomplete and imperfect human nature. It is not just a coincidence that the idea of the moral ideals and examples in some way goes back to ancient moral philosophy, especially to the Aristotelian moral ideas.

MacIntyre's Aristotelianism meets both these criteria. Not only does he acknowledge the 'fundamental contrast between man-as-he-happens-to-be and man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-essential-nature', but he also claims that, in order to make a transition from the former to the letter, an individual needs standards of excellence (and its examples) which should be provided by ethics. It is crucial then to consider the idea of *character* as a interpretative key to both MacIntyre's critique of modernity and his own conception.

What is a *character*? MacIntyre, while introducing this idea, refers to the dramatic tradition which makes use of "a set of stock of characters immediately recognizable to the audience" and "to understand them is to be provided with means of interpreting the behaviour of actors who play them" (MacIntyre 1984, 27). *Characters* are thus role-models of special significance for community members, as they embody the moral code of particular community. Incidentally MacIntyre does not explain the method of *character*'s selection. Is this selection connected only with the tradition of a particular community, or—as e.g. Max Scheler (who offers a totally different perspective than that of MacIntyre) claims—there are some fixed types of those models, defined by the set of fundamental values shaped by the life of every human community (see Scheler 1987)?

*Characters* represents the morality of the community and they are, as MacIntyre puts it, "masks worn by moral philosophies" (MacIntyre 1984, 28). Social significance of *characters* lays in their rechanneling moral views and actions of community members. For *characters* are not only objects of regard for the community members, but also they furnish them "with a cultural and moral ideal" (MacIntyre 1984, 29) defining simultaneously the content of the idea of morality shared by a particular community. In this sense, *characters* provide community members with an incentive to develop in a direction contingent on the moral scheme accepted by the community. They do not embody the perfection but, as MacIntyre claims, they embody the conflict as to the content of a particular *character*, and so, that is to say, as to the content of the idea of perfected human life.

How can an individual get in touch with *a character*? In order to account for this, MacIntyre's conception of practice should be recalled. He defines practice as

> "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative
> activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are

> realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excel-
> lence 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 system-
> atically extended" (187).

Practice is then a form of craft (*techne*), an art, taken as a form of *ars liberalis*.
It comes into being not as a part of an individual-made sphere of co-operation
with others, but it is determined independently of that individual. It is a way of
establishing the relation between an individual's particular personality and back-
ground and their social and cultural environment (*Umwelt*). The involvement
in practice is thus a moment of transcending the sphere of individuality and so
is it a moment of establishing the relation with the social setting (206–207).

It is important to take note of at least three features of the idea of practice
(craft). First, its aim is good which can be understood in at least three ways.
Second, it comprises standards of excellence. Third, the structure of action
within the practice is, in fact, a hermeneutical circle and, as such, it constitutes
a general model for all human intellectual activity.

Let me start from the very end. To enter into practice is to accept its histor-
ically determined norms and standards of excellence. But it does not mean that
we should reduce our activity to the automatic application of its rules (MacIn-
tyre 1988, 31; see also MacIntyre 1999, 93). For the aim of learning practice is
not only to acquire some competence typical of this particular practice, but also
to become its independent creative participant. For that purpose an authority
inherent to this practice must not only show others how to become an apprentice
in this practice, but also how to reinterpret the goal of the practice itself. In
*Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* MacIntyre says that to become an ap-
prentice is to transform one's personality (MacIntyre 1990, 60–61). To become
an apprentice is not only to act according to some external criteria independent
of us, but also to give up, at least to some extent, our personal autonomy and
allow ourselves to be in some part determined by the community and history of
the practice.

In this way the fundamental relationship between the authority and the ap-
prentice shows up. The general function of the authority is to indicate and
legitimize norms and rules defining particular practice and to introduce an indi-
vidual to that practice. On the other hand, the relationship with the authority
thus defined is also a moment of connecting practical thinking (associated with
particular craft) with the wider cultural context. For neither practice nor ethos
can exist alone, but they are defined (at least to some extent), and their sta-
tus is determined, by the tradition of a particular community. It is for that
purpose that MacIntyre, while analysing the *character,* points out some moral
restrictions placed by the *character* on the personality of an individual who has
this particular social role (MacIntyre 1984, 27). There is no difference between
learning the technical part of practice and being introduced to its ethos which
is determined by the tradition of a community. It is thus the authority who
provides the grasp of the tradition and links isolated actions into a coherent

and intelligible whole by referring them to the wider context of the community. What makes the *character* unique as a type of a moral authority is that it is a social role representative of the *whole* cultural context. For, as MacIntyre says in *Three Rival Versions*:

> "By accepting authority [. . .] one acquires a teacher who both introduces one to certain texts and educates one in becoming a sort of person capable of reading those texts with understanding, texts in which such a person discovers the story of him or herself, including the story of how he or she was transformed into a reader of these texts. This story of oneself is embedded in the story of the world, an overall narrative within which all other narratives find their place. That history is a movement towards the truth becoming manifest, a movement towards intelligibility. But in the course of discovering the intelligibility of the order of things, we also discover why at different stages greater or lesser degrees of unintelligibility remain. And in learning this we learn that authoritative testimony, to point us forward from where we are now, can never in our present bodily life be dispensed with. So continuous authority receives its justification as indispensable to continuing progress, the narrative of which we first learned how to recount from that authority and the truth of which is confirmed by our further progress, including that progress made by means of dialectical enquiry." (MacIntyre 1990, 92)

The result of this is not only the historical changeability of *characters* but also conflict that lies in the very heart of their essence. This conflict concerns the real essence of a particular *character* (MacIntyre 1984, 30) but it is also the conflict with which the individual is faced because of the tension between the ties of the tradition and the demands of modernity and, at the same time, between different interpretations of the *character*. For every individual, with their own background, interprets the demands of the *character* in a slightly different way. It is also, so to say, a moment of one's individualization whereby the person, while interpreting the demands of the tradition-based *character,* adjusts them to modernity.

Thus, the *character* is unique in its openness. It is open to the variety of interpretative contexts and practices, as well as to reinterpretation due to changes possible in the nature of practice or in the social environment. That is why incorporating the individual's thinking into the social and cultural life of the community must be recognized as the main goal and the basic good of this kind of education. What is more, the good that we gain while being involved in some practice is not only a specific practical goal of the craft, but also the narrative and intelligible order of our lives that we thus acquire. For paradigms of perfection, as Macintyre remarks, are not only exemplifications of the best standards reached so far but, in the first place, they are the guidelines for further development (MacIntyre 1990, 65–66). That statement enables us to define the good which we acquire due to practice and contact with the relevant authority. First, only good internal to practice and connected with the standards of perfection may be

pointed out as the real goal of activity within the practice. External good, which can be acquired in different ways is, in MacIntyre's view, genuine good which makes the identification of practice *qua* practice and personal development of the person involved in it impossible. Finally, general good reached by the individual who identifies their personality by the system of social roles connected with practice is the narrative unity of their life. It is the narrative unity that makes the person's life and action intelligible not only to others but also to themselves. It is done in that way because the way in which the individual learns how to became an independent subject of the practice is also a way in which they learn how to become an independent subject as such. It is the authority that embodies and shows the apprentice what it means to be a person in a particular community and what the idea of the common life is.

## 2. What is Wrong With A Public Life?

Let us consider now MacIntyre's critique of modern culture, starting with an analysis of three *characters* typical of modern culture: Rich Aesthete, Manager and Therapist. The essence of the critique of these *characters* comes down to two things. The moral culture which they represent is the culture of unencumbered self, whose will and preferences are not regulated in any socially accepted way. Because of this the world and social environment seem to them "nothing but a meeting place for individual wills, each with its own set of attitudes and preferences" (MacIntyre 1984, 25), that is, an area of action free of any moral judgements as they are covered up by 'professional' jargon (see Ballard 2000, 9), as in the case of Rich Aesthete or Therapist. What is more, nobody is responsible for that kind of actions, as there is no source of responsibility. Second, in Therapist's actions, as well as in those of Manager, the difference between manipulative and non-manipulative social relations is blurred.

The key role of Manager as a central *character* emerges from the combination of these two features. Lawlessness and unencumberency of Aesthete's actions become 'professionalised' here. Private, so to say, preferences of the individual are elevated to a fundamental mechanism of the organization of social life. Effectiveness taken unilaterally as the only criterion for Manager's actions does not allow formulating the question about the good, which could be the aim of practice managed by him. From this point of view, as well as from that of Therapist, the question about such good is, in fact, ridiculous. The situation of Manager is, as a matter of fact, symptomatic: he cannot justify the premises of his own actions and nor can he question the rationale behind his own goals. Hence, MacIntyre claims, the difference between the authority of Manager and his power is erased. The power, being effective, legitimises itself and, as such, is given authority. Subsequently, in absence of any other criteria except for effectiveness, the power shifts into the hands of the most effective person. In this sense an expert of a bureaucratic organization, that is Manager, legitimises himself.

This situation brings us to the problem of political subjecthood. For if MacIntyre's view on bureaucracy is true, the state based on such a view must take

the power as its subject. From this point of view, the 'democratic institutions' are, first of all, bureaucratic institutions and the democracy appears to be a façade. True expression of preferences, interests and good of the citizens is not what we can be sure to find behind it. The state organised by the standards of modern bureaucracy is governed according to the rules of mutually contradictory inclinations, in which a reflection on how to realise the real needs of citizens has been displaced with the power of money. In MacIntyre's own words: "although most citizens share, although to greatly varying extents, in such public goods as those of a minimally secure order, the distribution of goods by government in no way reflects a common mind arrived at through widespread shared deliberation governed by norms of rational enquiry" (MacIntyre 1999, 131).

For that purpose the individual is able to achieve their goods only by letting bureaucracy take control over them, yet in this way they slip into, as Slavoy Žižek calls it, interpassivity (see Žižek 1997). Interpassivity of the political self, as seen by MacIntyre, should be understood as laying the burden of political activity onto the institutions of power. How this mechanism works is very elusive. For there is still, on the one hand, the facade of the democratically-run public order with the *demos* retained as the subject of the politics, but, on the other hand, both the spectrum of acceptable views and forms of their expression are restricted (because of the very narrow spectrum of political representation, as in the United States, and some political views labelled as incompatible with the 'common sense'). That is why MacIntyre's critique of modernity is directed not only against the bureaucratic state, but also against liberal 'common sense' and 'professionalism' in social sciences.

The modern interpassive self is the subject in politics only occasionally. They cannot change it for the social environment in which they live cannot furnish him with the background for an alternative vision of the social and political *status quo.* The modern self is faced with the following choice: liberalism and emotivism which prevent them from formulating any view of themselves that would include their social background and temporal dimension of existence, versus the unconsciousness of the *Volk* which generates not only a similarly interpassive relation to the institutions of power, but also interferes with their developing their capabilities of practical and theoretical reasoning. In both cases it is a 'professional expert' appointed by the institution of power who is the real political agent. Even if the good is the declared goal of the expertise management, its formulation cannot be clear in the public discourse. This is why MacIntyre calls modern politics the theatre of illusions in which money and rhetorical skills are the most important tools of power (MacIntyre 1984, 76–77).

This situation, MacIntyre claims, is the result of the changes not only in politics but also in the shared conception of the society. The construal of the 'individual' as the unencumbered self independent of their social environment has caused 'the blending of languages' which results in the impossibility of individuals reaching a consensus in the debates on individual and common good. The famous call to construct new communities "within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages" (Mac-

Intyre 1984, 263) from the very end of *After Virtue* should be understood as an appeal to reconsider our political agency.

Importantly, form this point of view, we cannot draw dividing lines between the political, social and intellectual (or educational) dimensions of the agency. For if we want to describe the poverty of the modern self, we have to notice that it cannot find any antidote for its interpassivity in the education system. Both modern philosophy, especially the western analytical philosophy, as MacIntyre claims, and the most common type of the western university are organised according to the intellectual and moral standards embodied by Manager. Philosophy has lost its status of the master-craft thereby becoming a problem for itself while fragmentation and 'scientific' demands of philosophical analysis discourage rather than encourage an intellectual quest for the sense of life and good. Along the same lines, the university as an institution whose function is to manufacture qualified professionals does not allow for the search of self-knowledge or the ability of discussion with others (MacIntyre 1990, 7–8).

As a result, due to MacIntyre's diagnosis, the man turns out to be deprived of his subjecthood and his ability to realize his essential nature can be questioned. For what modern culture misses is the fundamental intellectual character of human beings which enables us to exercise the powers of practical reasoning and reflection that makes it possible for us to make crucial decisions about our lives (see MacIntyre 1990, 175).

## 3. Politics, Virtues and Intellectualism

What then, contrary to the situation described above, should the well-ordered self be like? What is the essential nature that we should realize in our lives?

The subjecthood of man is organised in two dimensions—biological and cultural. In *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre approaches (at least to some extent) evolutionary psychology (see e.g. Tomasello 1999) in that he points out that we cannot think of human agency and the relation of the individual to the tradition without taking the fundamental biological dimension of our existence into account. The fundamental dimension of the existence is determined by the vital dependency for we need others just to survive, especially at the very early stage of our lives.

The well ordered community renders it possible for man to not only obtain one's goals and realize one's desires but also to realize their *human* capabilities. It is crucial to consider what MacIntyre calls 'distinctively human' possibilities and capabilities which should be developed in the network of communal help starting at the stage of parental care. Witness, however, that this consideration is possible only within an Aristotelian perspective but not within any post-Enlightenment one. The cognitive resources of Aristotelianism allow us to realize that in modern, post-Enlightenment culture we lose the possibility to exercise our intellectual and reflective abilities, that is, our distinctively human nature and distinctively human way of life.

For the man in full bloom is, as MacIntyre calls it, an 'independent practical

reasoner'. We become such reasoners by exercising our rationality in the framework of language and culture. During the socialization process it is not that the individual is 'given' the ability to use language nor are they 'forced' into the framework of a particular tradition. Their primary animal capabilities evolve in the context of this tradition, instead. This is why MacIntyre emphasizes the significance of socialization. To learn a language is to learn the modes of understanding the world typical of a particular culture. For language, as MacIntyre maintains, is not only a medium of communication but also a mode of structuring the world and as such it is not impartial. While describing the environment, man simultaneously builds a system of senses and values, that is, a culture which is their natural environment.

MacIntyre claims that the roots of language go back to the ability to achieve good (MacIntyre 1999, 25). Language should be, most of all, understood as a medium of communication of intentional states and emotions. The cognition of these states is an "interpretative knowledge", a practical ability derived from social relations. The knowledge of emotions and plans is derived from responsive sympathy and empathy "elicited through action and interaction and without these we could not, as we often do, impute to those others the kind of reasons for their actions that, by making their actions intelligible to us to respond to them in ways that they too can find intelligible" (14). In the community while learning a language we recognize the ways of action typical of the cultural code of this community and we acquire the ability to relate to the other members of the community and, thereby, to understand them. The development of intellectual traditions within the framework provided by a language, established narrative forms and practical rationality is based on this distinctively human element of our nature.

Similarly, it is also due to being introduced to a particular cultural code that we can come to control our emotions. To learn how to do this and how to make them intelligible to others is an important component of moral education that is possible only within the framework provided by the community. MacIntyre calls emotions "norm-governed" (MacIntyre 1988, 76) for the forms of their expression are strictly connected with the set of norms typical of a particular community and with the rules and standards of rationality determined by a particular culture.

Also, it is during socialization taken as the introduction to the culture of a particular community that the individual is provided with the intellectual tool of acquiring self-knowledge. For, as stressed by MacIntyre, we learn a language by being introduced to the set of texts which determine the paradigms of expressions typical of this language (382–383). At the same time, we are introduced to the set of texts which describe or, more precisely, illustrate the way of understanding human life in this tradition. It is only through the construal of our life as a unity that we can find sense in it and recapitulate and judge our deeds (MacIntyre 1984, 218–219). It is impossible to understand a human out of the context of the history of their life. Only after considering life as a unity of the quest for good can we judge whether the life was successful or not. What is specifically meant here is a possibility of such a quest without specifying *a priori* any particular good. For, as Macintyre claims, "a quest is always an education both as to

the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge", which makes him further argue that 'the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man" (MacIntyre 1984, 219).

MacIntyre approximates here to the construal of human life from the perspective of the hermeneutical circle. For if it is not our decision to enter a particular narrative and it is not us who determine our starting point but it is socialization and primal education that establish those conditions and forms. It is the possibility of a reflective understanding of our own life that promotes a 'transcendental analysis' of our self-knowledge and renders us able to move towards our *true telos*. But what, in fact, are we looking for?

MacIntyre as accepts the Aristotelian vision of the end of human life. Accordingly what we are looking for is the happiness, *eudaimonia*. It is in *Short History of Ethics* that MacIntyre pays attention to the intellectual character of *eudaimonia* in Aristotle (MacIntyre 1998b, 57–58). In *After Virtue* he broadens this interpretation and connects the meaning of this term with good fortune, which makes him claim, that "what constitutes the good for man is a complete human life at its best" (MacIntyre 1984, 149). MacIntyre's positions are thus close to Aristotle's. Still, it is interesting to note that in *Whose justice? Which Rationality?* and *Three Rival Version* he is barely interested in this concept. It is not till *Dependent Rational Animals* that he formulates the idea of *flourishing* as a way of understanding *eudaimonia*.

The basic dimension of human good is thus determined by its biological nature. This basis is then structured by providing an outlet for the forms of expressions of emotions and taking control over them. The distinctively human attitude is thus to distance oneself from one's emotions and to be able to take over intellectual control (MacIntyre 1999, 69 and 105–106). As MacIntyre claims: "what is for human beings to flourish does of course vary from context to context, but in every context it is as someone exercises in a relevant way the capabilities of an independent practical reasoner that her or his potentialities for flourishing in a specifically human way are developed. So if we want to understand how it is to be good for humans to live, we need to know what it is to be excellent as an independent practical reasoner, that is, what the virtues of independent practical reasoner are." (MacIntyre 1999, 77)

In *Practical Rationalities as Forms of Social Structures* MacIntyre links practical rationality with actions and says that "to learn to be rational is to be initiated into and trained in the habits of action and judgement which dispose one to be so moved. So also to be rational as a member of a particular social order is to participate in some particular community in the relevant ways and to be moved by the acknowledged or to be acknowledged good reasons of that particular social order." (MacIntyre 1998d, 121) We gain this kind of rationality through the reflection on the principles of our actions and actions of others. It is then in some part an empirical element of our personality derived from the practical knowledge of interpersonal relationships. We are gradually brought to this kind of rationality form the very beginning of our lives. To introduce some distance between the self and its emotions so that it could analyse the emotions

is a key element of this education. It is also a prerequisite for assessing reasons for action (MacIntyre 1999, 68–69).

The practical rationality thus conceived provides the basis of our moral life. It is the possibility of reasoning, distancing oneself and analysing one's passions and motives that makes their evaluation and hierarchization possible. In *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre argues that it takes the ability to come up with alternative solutions for the future. Hence the conclusion that practical reasoning is a syllogism (MacIntyre 1984, 161–162; MacIntyre 1988, 129–130, 139–140). Notice that it follows that the moral decisions are, in fact, a matter of knowledge. It is also of crucial importance that MacIntyre equates the major (initial) premise of that syllogism with the good which is the goal of action. But where is the idea of such good taken from?

The individual's reasoning and their quest for good is based on the idea of good given through the standards of practice and social relations in which the individual is involved. It is in this context that the intellectual character of the quest, which, for MacIntyre, is the sense of human life, becomes obvious. Every man organises his life in the way which is determined by this person's possibilities, capabilities, received education and aspirations as well as the possibilities offered by a particular tradition. Real life defines good for, as MacIntyre claims, "the grasp of the concept of human flourishing to which reasoner appeals had to itself to be acquired in the course of practical experience" (MacIntyre 1999, 113). Outside of practice, there is no possibility to define the horizon within which the idea of flourishing (and happiness) could appear.

Nevertheless, it is only a conscious life that may lead to the formulation of such an idea. This statement refers to Aristotle's concept of the contemplative life as the best way to *human* goal. MacIntyre seems to agree with this concept for, as I noticed above, MacIntyre's idea of practice does, in fact, reach beyond itself and, as a result, the individual can finally ask the question about their good *qua* a human being.

In *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre writes: "those quantities of mind and character that enable someone both to recognize the relevant goods and to use the relevant skills in achieving them are the excellences, the virtues, that distinguish or should distinguish teacher from apprentice or student" (MacIntyre 1999, 92). It is because of the virtues, as classified by Aristotle, that we can not only control our practice by force of habit, but also to assess our goals correctly. The virtues can be gained only in the course of practice as it is practice that determines our status within the community (it furnishes us with social role). That is why, as MacIntyre claims, learning virtues is not only a moral education but by learning them we also learn how to play our social roles correctly (88–89). Virtues should then 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 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" (MacIntyre 1984, 219). They are a mediator between human nature and the good (MacIntyre 1999, 159). For

it is natural human temper that lies in the heart of the virtues but if they are practiced rightly than they can furnish us with the ideas of good that extend beyond the biological dimension of human nature. What is more, the criterion for the correctness of their practice is certified by the harmony between the animal and cultural dimensions of human nature.

It appears then that the idea of virtues, as in the case of the ideas of practice and the moral example, extends beyond the sphere of *praxis*. The reflective character of virtues emphasizes the rational aspect of human nature while the answer to the question of what is the proper virtuous deed exceeds the provisional character of a one-time solution. That is why MacIntyre says that "it is for the sake of achieving this letter good [the good of a human as such—P. M.] that we practice the virtues and we do so by making choices about means to achieve that end [. . . ] Such choices demand judgments and the exercise of the virtues requires therefore a capacity to judge and to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way. The exercise of such judgement is not routinizable application of rules" (MacIntyre 1984, 150).

That is why the fundamental role is played by the virtue of practical wisdom, *phronesis*, the concept of which is strictly connected with the distinction into two kinds of knowledge: a practical knowledge (*phronesis*) and a theoretical knowledge (*sofia*).

In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre points out that the function of *phronesis* is to apply the general statements (truths) concerning the good of a person *qua* human to the particular person and situation (MacIntyre 1988, 115–116). It is then a kind of an interpretative knowledge, intermediate between 'professional' intellectual activity (philosophy) and everyday practice. It is then crucial to notice that, in the light of the above statements, it is clear that MacIntyre takes *phronesis* as a virtue that not only determines the person's right conduct, but also makes the intellectual (reflective, philosophical) way of life possible. The individual's aspiration to become *phronemos* enables them to achieve *sofia*. Accordingly, MacIntyre claims that every moral conduct is determined by the first philosophical premises which for the particular community members are the first principles embodied in the tradition of the community. What is more, in *On Not Having the Last Word* he points out that the difference between "different types of interpretative practice" can be grasped only after being introduced into the exercise of this practice (MacIntyre 2002, 165). It is only in this context that the sense of MacIntyre's statement that "hermeneutics [. . . ] is a subdiscipline of ethics" (169) is clear, for without making the initial decisions concerning the ways of establishing cognitive possibilities and the knowledge of modes of human acting, it is impossible to build moral philosophy. But every recognition of such a possibility is already determined by cultural presuppositions prior to the individual's consciousness. That is to say, the circular character of hermeneutical cognition determines the character of the relationship between the first premises of thought, its object and the possibilities of the application of its results. In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre writes:

"the deliberative task of rational construction is [. . . ] one which is-

sues in an hierarchical ordering of means to their ends, in which the ultimate end is specified in a formulation which provides the first principle or principles from which are deduced statements of those subordinate ends which are means to the ultimate end. What is an ordered hierarchy of 'for the sake of' relations leading to the *arche* is also a deductive hierarchy descending from the *arche.* It is only of course by invoking additional premises, independently supported, that deliberation can arrive at an end product in which the particular types of circumstance of *this* particular agent can be understood to make it the case that for him to pursue the good and the best involves the here-and-now pursuit of this highly specific good. And [...] one of the marks of *phronesis* is that someone is able to identify just which circumstances are relevant and therefore which premises must be utilized in the deliberative construction." (MacIntyre 1988, 132)

This kind of reasoning is apparently circular. The first premises must be known to make the practical reasoning possible. MacIntyre agrees with Aristotle that it is a syllogism (129–130). But how can the first premises be known if they simultaneously appear to be the conclusion of this syllogism?

In answer to this question we must take note of MacIntyre's partial dependency on Gadamer. For if it is the cultural heritage of the community embodied in the tradition that is a source of the moral content reflected by the individuals, it follows that the *arche* of reasoning must also be the *arche* of the tradition. MacIntyre generally accepts Gadamer's stance on this point (MacIntyre 2002, 170–171). What we can understand is language, but it is understood in a Gadamerian way, i.e. as a distinctively human environment (*Umwelt*). The unique character of conscious human life rests on the fact that the possibility of transcending the everyday experience towards the *episteme* is facilitated by language. Reflection on the resources of language understood as reflection on the cultural heritage that determines the self is conducted in this particular language. To make an attempt to find one's own identity is to make an attempt to find its general principles. This means that phronetic reasoning taken as a move towards the individual's self-consciousness must include theoretical reflection on those principles (*archai*) (MacIntyre 1998a, 171–175).

MacIntyre notices that the first principles thus understood can be conceived only within a particular intellectual scheme. We use its contents as a self-evident argument supported by language norms. That is why, in MacIntyre's view, the epistemological stand is always first-person. But from his point of view, based on the Aristotelian and Thomistic ideas, it is the third-person objective perspective that we should try to reach. We can achieve this perspective by realizing the modes of our cognition. "My mind or rather my soul is only one among many and its own knowledge of my self *qua* soul has to be integrated into general account of souls and their teleology" (176). For when we make an analysis of a particular problem we must start with the starting point of our tradition, but then we can subject our consciousness to some kind of 'transcendental analysis'

(or better—hermeneutical analysis) which faces us with the enclosed character of our enquiry. For the object of such an enquiry is in some way primarily recognized within the intellectual scheme within which we enquire.

Enquiring from the standpoint of a particular intellectual scheme, the self in the first place recognises the structure of this scheme. Thus practical reasoning appears as the only introduction to theoretical enquiry which is essential for finding the solution to practical problems. As MacIntyre claims: "the *telos/finis* of any type of systematic activity is [. . . ] that end internal to activity of that specific kind, for the sake of which and in the direction of which activity is carried forward" (182). The difference between practical and theoretical philosophy is thus the difference in the goal, which is the action for practical and cognition for theoretical philosophy. The structure of the two kinds of philosophy is the same while the goals are connected with each other. This makes MacIntyre claim that "achieved understanding is the *theoretical* goal of the *practical* activity of enquiry" (183). For every intellectual activity must be confronted with theoretical problems. The goal of such a theoretical enquiry being achieved, we can go back to its practical application.

The goal of intellectual activity should be then taken as *clarifying*. Philosophy is a type of enquiry which transcends the particularities of human activity and is itself involved in its starting point, but it is also this point that makes any rational enquiry possible. For, as MacIntyre claims, in both practical and theoretical enquiry the goal is also "the *telos* of moral enquiry, which is excellence in the achievement not only of adequate theoretical understanding of the specifically human good, but also of the practical embodiment of that understanding in the life of the particular enquirer" (MacIntyre 1990, 62–63). It is crucial for my interpretation of MacIntyre's thought to stress his view of philosophy as the way of life which is facilitated by *phronesis* (see MacIntyre 1998a, 189).

It is clear now why philosophy thus seen must be taken as enquiry in the history of culture, due to which it is possible not only to account for a particular situation but also to find its cause, to identify its relation with the broader cultural context and, by the analysis on the level of metaphysics, to set criteria for assessing similar problems. An important part of such philosophy must be the spinning of narratives, both individual and communal, and their intellectual analysis. That is why MacIntyre accepts Aristotle's claim that the person interested in myths is already a philosopher (193). To recognize one's own history as a part of a broader narrative is an important part of tradition-based enquiry in both practical and theoretical dimensions. For I cannot stake claims to the truth of my statements independently of the history of my enquiries and independently of the history of intellectual scheme within which I speak and the society of which I am a member. The claims to the truth may then be approached only with warranted assertibility.

MacIntyre calls philosophy seen along such lines craft (*techne*). It is, of course, craft understood as *ars liberalis* or the practice in the sense of MacIntyre. It is then a kind of intellectual craft whose structure is similar to every other kind of craft (MacIntyre 1990, 61). In both cases an apprentice to the craft has to learn to tell the difference between what is good and best for them at

their level and in general, and to judge their mistakes in applying standards considered best in particular craft. The ability of such a judgement must be derived not only form the practical reasoning (*phronesis*) but also, as we are to discover the objective nature of particular practice, from theoretical enquiry. Every craft (practice) demands the knowledge of its tradition, the ability of its critical analysis and the possibility of applying its heritage. In philosophy as well as in every other craft, the apprentice has to learn to recognize their own weaknesses which limit their heading for the *telos* of the craft and to recognize the virtues, which they should exercise in the course of achieving the goal of the craft (61–62).

Thus, there is no significant difference between moral and scientific thinking. Without proper conduct, the individual is not able to recognize their true good and, as a consequence, they are not able to flourish. So philosophy thus construed is the *techne* of self-knowledge which can transcend our particular point of view. What is more, when philosophy is understood as a *techne* of 'moral enquiry', it can be exercised not only as a kind of science but also as *philosophy* which important part is its practical application. In 'master-craft' thus conceived the existential consequences of the enquiry's results cannot be separated from the results themselves. It is reflection that permits right and successful action and these two dimensions are strictly connected (62). For the *techne* of philosophy appears the most important human practice which enables man to live a proper life and to move towards both personal and essential goods. Philosophy is then a 'spiritual guide'. It is human practice that crowns all human intellectual activities.

If my interpretation of MacIntyre's philosophy is correct, it is possible now to pinpoint an ideal that represents it. I consider the *character* of the Philosopher to be such an ideal.

The two levels of thought mentioned above converge when it comes to their goal. For, as MacIntyre claims:

> "to live a practically well-ordered life is to embody the universal concepts which we comprehend and justify in (moral) enquires in the particularities of our individual lives. So the moral life is the life of embodied moral enquiry and those individuals who live out the moral life as farmers, or fishermen, or furniture makers embody more or less adequately in those lives, devoted in the key parts to their own crafts, what may often not be recognized as a theory, the product of the theorist's very different craft, but which nevertheless is one. And the particularities of such lives in a variety of significant ways embody and continue the traditions, moral, religious, and intellectual, of such communities as those of family, the city, the clan, and the nation. Thus political narratives of success or failure in the making and sustaining of such communities are also inescapably narratives of embodied moral enquiry, itself successful or unsuccessful." (80)

In this context it becomes apparent why in *Dependent Rational Animals* MacIntyre calls man 'the reasoner'. Man is taken as a rational being, and the exercise

of their reflective capabilities is crucial for them to develop not only within the practices that they undertake but also by identifying themselves within the network of the practices as a *human*. What is more, in MacIntyre's view, these two moments cannot be separated. Being involved in the relationship with the tradition and authority connected with some practice makes the individual open to the contact with the social and cultural heritage and gives them a possibility to establish their identity and to define their goals. These possibilities are, nevertheless, preceded by the reflective abilities of the individual of both practical reasoning and theoretical enquiry. Practical reasoning is thus only a beginning of the exercise of the individual's intellectual possibilities which should be exercised by every single man and woman as much as it is possible for him or her to became a *philosopher,* i.e. the searcher of wisdom which can be taken as the knowledge of good à la Socrates.

On the other hand in some parts of *Three Rival Versions* MacIntyre, while describing the person involved in 'moral enquiry' taken as a curricular discipline, uses the term 'enquirer' and concentrates on this person's duties as a scientist. For there can be no distinction between practical reasoning of particular people and the 'professional' philosophical enquiry. Being introduced to the network of practices, the individual recognizes the teleological scheme of understanding which is best described, in MacIntyre's opinion, in *Nicomachean Ethics.* Simultaneously, philosophy can be either a part of social life (and in antiquity it was a central element—see MacIntyre 1984, 36–37; MacIntyre 1988, 247) or a professionalized academic activity in which case it excludes itself from this life and becomes part of a curriculum of an unknown purpose (Macintyre 1990, 168).

In search of identity, the individual learns how to use its reflective capabilities in the way typical of classical philosophy (MacIntyre 1998c, 140). In trying to understand their own good as well as the ultimate human good, the individual is faced with the necessity to acquire at least the basics of philosophical skills. But to exercise the capabilities of practical reasoning, the plain person needs the teacher, i.e. the authority who can introduce them to the proper ways of thought and continuously inspire them to develop their intellectual skills.

Philosophy thus, from MacIntyre's point of view, must be rooted in the everyday routine of the community to the degree that not only academic philosophers are the subject of the moral discourse. For MacIntyre's goal, if my interpretation of his work is correct, is to reformulate the culture in the way in which every single individual will be aware of the necessity of intellectual activity in their life. For that purpose the Philosopher must be conceived as a central *character*. As the *character* they must embody the interpretative conflict concerning not only the status and goals of philosophy, but also, and in the first place, concerning the goal of human activity and the best ways of achieving it. As a *character* the Philosopher is something more than a social role of an academic researcher. They represent MacIntyre's vision of the human as an intellectual being. As a *character* the Philosopher should be taken as a 'measure' of communal life. But as such they are *also* a role model for 'professional' philosophers.

The Philosopher as an embodiment of reflectiveness thus understood must then be the return to the ancient idea of the wisdom searcher. But this *character*

is based on the social role of the 'professional' philosopher undertaking 'moral enquiry'. The mode of establishing their status within the community and in which the results of their work are transferred to the community is an indicator of the relationship of the society to the sphere of scientific research. In this *character* the efforts to understand (clarify) our own identity, the claims to the truth and applications of the results are joined.

The Philosopher seen in this way cannot be a 'holy man' who knows the objective truth, but rather a master in a master-craft, a guide in a quest for the good and unity of life, but also a member of the community, not an 'independent expert' (as the Therapist and the Manager are). The Philosopher's efforts to clarify the world (biological as well as social and cultural) involve in some part the continuous reminding of the historical character of every cognition and claim to the truth. This kind of spiritual (intellectual) guidance does not consist in making others move towards the ends defined *a priori*, but rather in encouraging them to exercise theirs abilities to reason and initiate the discourse with the heritage of a given tradition as well as with others. In this sense the Philosopher, unlike the Manager and the Therapist, tries to establish non-manipulative social relations within the community. Socrates, that is to say, is the paradigm of such a *character*.

The first step for individuals involved in 'moral enquiry' at the level of both academic and everyday reflection is a conversion of the individual's personality to the position of an apprentice in one of practices (crafts), for "unless we already have within ourselves the potentiality for moving towards and achieving the relevant theoretical and practical conclusions we shall be unable to learn. But we also need a teacher to enable us to actualize that potentiality." (MacIntyre 1990, 63) The basis of the philosophical conduct at both levels is the acknowledgement of our ignorance and the virtue of modesty connected with it. Starting with modesty, 'virtues of acknowledged dependence' can be derived to tie the individual consciously with the particular community. Those virtues (as well as the virtue of justice) to some extent constitute *phronesis* which concerns both the ability of just assessment of a situation and self-knowledge. The *character* of the Philosopher is especially important in this context, as it is by reflecting its content that the individual can assess their own actions as well as successes or failures in developing their intellectual capabilities.

The aim of the Philosopher's work is to teach or rather promote a theoretical way of life, according to Aristotle's teaching. The personal virtue of the individual lies in intellectual perfection and contemplation. The Philosopher as a *character* is not an 'ideal' in the meaning of perfected man but rather an object of social identification and the model of a social change. For that purpose it should be considered, just as the exemplars of wisdom in ancient philosophical school were, an object of contemplation and debate, the exemplar which should encourage personal development. It is crucial to notice that this development has to have important social and political consequences. Only from this point of view, I think, can we understand the importance of the family and university as the key institutions of the state, as MacIntyre sees it, and the stress he puts

on the necessity of the role played by the educated public in the well ordered community (MacIntyre 1987).

What MacIntyre wants us to remember, from this point of view, is that the only cure for the poverty of modern agency is the radical turn towards conscious subjecthood based on the intellectual, reflective capabilities of man. MacIntyre's conception of the state, the state that respects the autonomy of the individual and puts stress upon their political subjecthood, should be rooted in the society in which individuals can not only express their opinions but also take part in the institutions of power as much as possible. In this way MacIntyre's radical intellectualism focused on the *character* of the Philosopher turns out to be the remedy for the interpassivity of modernity.

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