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## ALASDAIR MACINTYRE: AN ALTERNATIVE TO INDIVIDUALISM

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Alasdair MacIntyre is a key figure in the Liberalism-Communitarianism debate, one of the most important and fruitful in the field of Moral and Political Philosophy in the second half of the 20th century. In spite of his resistance to being labeled as a ‘communitarianist’, MacIntyre has been considered one of the most important representatives (with others like Walzer, Sandel, Taylor, Etzioni, et al.) of this current,<sup>2</sup> one that developed to a great extent as a response to Rawls’ Liberalism in his

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<sup>1</sup> This paper summarizes the content of a PhD dissertation finished in 2005. A short summary of this work was delivered as a communication at the international conference “Alasdair MacIntyre’s Revolutionary Aristotelianism”, held by the London Metropolitan University (London, June 29–July 1, 2007). The entire content of this dissertation was published in 2007 (December) in Spanish under the title *Comunitarismo contra individualismo: una revisión de los valores de Occidente desde el pensamiento de A. MacIntyre*. We thank Dr. MacIntyre for his comments and conversations during a stay at Notre Dame University in 2004. The bibliography used in this paper is that published until 2005. We indicate the complete information of the bibliographic references (with the name of the author with capital letters) only the first time that we cite the reference.

<sup>2</sup> There are many communitarianist authors. The most famous of them are M. Walzer, M. Sandel, C. Taylor, MacIntyre, R. Bellah and A. Etzioni (who founded in 1990 the communitarianist journal “The Responsive Community”), although there are more (R. Unger, P. Selznick, B. Barber, R. Ketcham, J. Auerbach, C. Bay, J. B. Abramson, W. M. Sullivan); M. Giusti, *Contextualizando el contextualismo. Reflexiones generales sobre el debate entre comunitaristas y liberales*, “Estudios de filosofía” 1996, (Venezuela), agosto, pp. 33–43; P. Nepi, *Individui e persona. L’identità del soggetto morale in Taylor, MacIntyre, e Jonas*, Roma 2000, p. 50; H. B. Tam, *Communitarianism. A New Agenda for Politics and Citizenship*, New York 1998, p. 23; D. L. Phillips, *Looking Backward: A Critical Appraisal of Communitarian Thought*, Princeton 1993, p. 197; E. López Castellón, *Autonomía y Comunidad. Sobre el debate entre comunitaristas y liberales*, “Revista de filosofía” 1996, Vol. 9, No. 15, pp. 183–207.

book *A Theory of Justice* (1971).<sup>3</sup> One of the most important points 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 (an idea maintained by MacIntyre throughout his intellectual evolution). MacIntyre's thought has been studied from many points of view, but there is no research on his global critique and alternative to Individualism. For that reason, the aim of this paper is to study and analyze such an alternative. The questions that we have had to answer are two: 1) Which are the concepts on which MacIntyre bases his alternative to Individualism?, 2) Does this alternative overcome Individualism?

In order to answer these questions, we have focused on MacIntyre's last period. It is known that his intellectual path includes different periods: Marxism, Freudianism, Christianity, etc. The most important one is that started in 1981 with *After Virtue*, a stage that opened his Aristotelic-Thomistic period, in which he continues to develop his thought.<sup>4</sup>

MacIntyre's thought has changed through these different stages. This fact makes any researcher develop a special work of analysis and 'reconstruction'. In order to show a coherent and unitary image of MacIntyre's concepts, we have made an attempt at 'reconstruction', so MacIntyre does not usually explain his ideas in a unitary way. Besides, we have made this reconstruction from the end, that is to say, from his last book (until 2005), *Dependent Rational Animals*, as well as from his last papers. Personal meetings with MacIntyre (during a stay at Notre Dame University in 2004) have been very helpful for us in writing this paper.

## The concept of 'individualism'

The content of this part is a methodological requirement: in order to analyze MacIntyre's alternative to Individualism, we need, first of all, to define what is individualism: what do we mean when we use this word.

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<sup>3</sup> M. Giusti, *Contextualizando el contextualismo...*, p. 35; P. Nepi, *Individui e persona...*, p. 50; H. B. Tam, *Communitarianism...*, p. 23; D. L. Phillips, *Looking Backward...*, p. 197; E. López Castellón, *Autonomía y Comunidad...*, p. 189.

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, this paper is based on the books *After Virtue* (1981), *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988), *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990), *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues* (1990) and *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999), and also on some papers published since 1981 (although, complementarily, we have used also some books and papers published before 1981). We focus on this period because is perhaps the most important period in MacIntyre's thought, and also because it is a 'whole' that can be studied independently, as MacIntyre and some critics have said (A. MacIntyre, *An Interview with Alasdair MacIntyre* by G. Reddiford and W. Watts Miller, "Cogito" 1991, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 67–77, reprinted in: (1) *The MacIntyre Reader*, ed. K. Knight, Cambridge 1998, pp. 267–275. In this paper, we indicate the page of this reprint but the year of the first edition: (2) *Key Philosophers in Conversation: The 'Cogito' Interviews*, ed. A. Pyle, London and New York 1999, pp. 75–84; *Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. M. C. Murphy, New York 2003, p. 1; A. Tulio Espinosa, *Alasdair MacIntyre: Ética Contextualizada*, Caracas 2000, p. 3; D. W. Solomon, *MacIntyre and Contemporary Moral Philosophy*, [in:] *Alasdair MacIntyre...*, pp. 114–151. In fact, M. C. Murphy calls this period the "'after virtue' project".

‘Individualism’ is a word with different meanings and signs throughout history.<sup>5</sup> In this field – Ethics and Political Philosophy – Individualism is often related to Liberalism, in such a way that MacIntyre, for instance, sometimes does not distinguish between them.<sup>6</sup> However, in an interview published in the journal *Cogito* in 1991, he distinguishes between the ‘individualistic culture of modernity’ and Liberalism as a changing political theory.<sup>7</sup> We think that this distinction is appropriate for our aim in this first section, and want to find – for a methodological reason – the essence of Individualism independently of the forms or signs that it can take according to specific theories, societies or periods. We are trying, therefore, to define ethical and political Individualism.<sup>8</sup> This does not imply, however – as we will see – that we think that Individualism can be understood only from Philosophy.

The origin of Individualism comes from a set of different facts which began to appear in Europe during the 14th century. In that century (and later), economic, religious, social and political changes brought about the birth of a new European culture. During that time and later, European nations emerged (with their princes), the unitary idea of ‘Christianity’ disappeared definitively, cities increased remarkably, and capitalist economy began to spread. In Philosophy, Nominalism proposed a new view of knowledge and reality, etc.<sup>9</sup>

Luther and Machiavelli played an important role in configuring that new culture.<sup>10</sup> Individual autonomy took an outstanding position both in religion and society, in economics, etc., since Individualism is a current (or rather an ‘attitude’) defined by theoretical and practical matters narrowly related to each other. In Philosophy, Individualism was defined by Contractualism (with figures like Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant) and Utilitarianism (with Hume, Bentham, James Mill, John Stuart Mill and Sidgwick).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> S. Lukes, *El individualismo*, transl. by J. L. Álvarez, Barcelona 1975, p. 11. Original English version: *Individualism*, Oxford 1973; A. Laurent, *Histoire de l'individualisme*, Paris 1993, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Individual and Social Morality in Japan and the United States: Rival Conceptions of the Self*, “Philosophy East and West” 1991, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Oct.), pp. 489–497.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, *An Interview with Alasdair MacIntyre...*, pp. 67–77. In his book *Humanismo cívico*, also the Spanish philosopher Alejandro Llano relates modernity to Individualism (A. Llano, *Humanismo cívico*, Barcelona 1999, p. 110).

<sup>8</sup> About this point and the following description, we thank Dr. Michael Zuckert, Dr. Javier De La Torre, Dra. Begoña Román, Dr. Carles Llinás, Dr. Jeff Langan, Dr. John Finnis and Dra. Mary Keys for their comments.

<sup>9</sup> C. Velarde, *Liberalismo y liberalismos*, “Cuadernos de anuario filosófico. Serie universitaria” 1997, No. 40, pp. 20, 44.

<sup>10</sup> L. Dumont, *Ensayos sobre el individualismo*, transl. by R. Tusón, Madrid 1987, pp. 87–92; S. Lukes, *El individualismo...*, p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> C. B. Macpherson, *La teoría política del individualismo posesivo: de Hobbes a Locke*, transl. J.-R. Capella Fontanella, Barcelona 1979, original version: *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford 1962, pp. 16–17; F. Vallespín Oña, *Nuevas teorías del contrato social: J. Rawls, R. Nozick y J. Buchanan*, Madrid 1985, p. 38; L. Dumont, *Ensayos sobre el individualismo...*, pp. 93–94.

In the light of this brief explanation and following various authors,<sup>12</sup> we can define Individualism as an ethical theory based on three points:

- 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 is 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 to the maximization of individual interests, and individual autonomy can be reduced only because of this maximization. Thus laws would be just a restrictive means to harmonize the search for that maximization.

### **'Narrative person': flourishing, virtue and community**

This is the first part in this paper dedicated to the set of concepts on which MacIntyre bases his alternative to Individualism. The aim of this section is to define what he considers to constitute a human being, which is the first question that has to be answered.

We have reconstructed that set of concepts starting from the concept of 'flourishing', which was developed in 1999 in *Dependent Rational Animals*. We have used it to put in order his former thought. This concept is so important that, in fact, MacIntyre's view of human view can be called, in our opinion, an 'anthropology of flourishing'.

MacIntyre does not think of a human being as a static being. He does not deal with 'the' human being but rather with 'every/each' human being, with 'this' person. That is why the first fact we state is that the human being is a being that develops itself, is always changing, progressing: 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
- to achieve virtues to some extent.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> C. B. Macpherson, *La teoría política del individualismo posesivo...*, pp. 225–226; C. Velarde, *Liberalismo y liberalismos...*, pp. 44–45; A. Laurent, *Histoire de l'individualisme...*, pp. 4–5; R. S. Devane, *The Failure of Individualism*, Dublin 1948, p. 28.

<sup>13</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*, London 1999.

For this reason, in ‘anthropology of flourishing’, independence is not the purpose but only a means to an appropriate definition of good, what virtue requires. The human being’s greatest good and final end is its flourishing (something impossible, for instance, for Rawls, who thinks that a ‘final’ end for a human being cannot exist).<sup>14</sup> Flourishing is the best development of a human being as a human being, development which includes a physical/biological field and also an intellectual/moral one. In *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre pays attention to that biological part of a human being’s flourishing. Human identity is a bodily/corporal identity, as is the case also in animals. Body is something essential in both human beings and animals.<sup>15</sup> This is so important for MacIntyre that he can say that human identity is an “animal identity”.<sup>16</sup> However human flourishing is different from animal development because of its intellectual/moral part, because of the independence in practical reasoning.

The concept of ‘flourishing’ makes it possible to see individual life as a narration, as a “narrative unity”, a term coined and developed in *After Virtue*.<sup>17</sup> This concept is perhaps one of the most famous in MacIntyre’s thought. MacIntyre says in this book that individual life can be understood as a ‘unity’, as a whole (with a beginning, a development and an end). And it can be understood as a whole theoretically because it is already understood like this ‘practically’, in particular actions.<sup>18</sup> Putting together both concepts (‘flourishing’ and ‘narrative unity’), we can say that human life is just the narration of individual flourishing (that is to say: the development of an individual as an independent practical reasoner).

In this way, human actions can be understood as a means to human flourishing, a development which is both a theoretical and a practical process. Although MacIntyre does not talk about ‘eudaimonia’, it can be said that the concept of ‘flourishing’ assumes the structure of the Aristotelian theory of happiness. As Corral notes, if an action is a good action when it contributes to human unity (to human flourishing), “it leads us to the question about happiness and to the way to achieve it”.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge–Massachusetts 1978, Spanish transl.: *Una teoría de la justicia*, transl. by M. Dolores González, México–Madrid 1995, p. 554.

<sup>15</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition*, Notre Dame 1998, pp. 196–197; idem, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 8–9. MacIntyre dedicates some chapters in *Dependent Rational Animals* (pp. 31–36, 43–46, 56–61) to thinking about whether animals can have beliefs. He deals with many authors (Norman Malcolm, Donald Davidson, Stephen Stich, John Searle, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, John McDowell, et al.) and concludes that some animals can have beliefs. We agree with MacIntyre that the relationship between animals and human beings can be useful in order to better understand human identity, although we think that there are some gaps in his argument (for example, reflection on the foundation of human rationality).

<sup>17</sup> MacIntyre does not relate these concepts to each other in *Dependent Rational Animals* (where he explains the flourishing), although we think that they are complementary concepts: there can be a narrow relationship between them. In fact, in our opinion, the concept of ‘flourishing’ is useful for understanding MacIntyre’s concepts previous to *Dependent Rational Animals...* We thank Dr. Fulvio Di Blasi for his comments on this issue.

<sup>18</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue...*, pp. 118, 130.

<sup>19</sup> C. Corral, *Acción, identidad y tradición: el argumento narrativo*, [in:] *Crisis de valores. Modernidad y tradición (Un profundo estudio de la obra de A. MacIntyre)*, ed. M. Mauri, B. Román et al., Barcelona

In fact, MacIntyre argues in his paper “Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods”, that the structure of every individual life is a “proto-Aristotelian” structure.<sup>20</sup> And, in that structure, everything which exists by nature tends to develop itself in its best possible way.<sup>21</sup> And the best for the human being is happiness, its greatest good,<sup>22</sup> so that it unifies and ‘leads’ every action.<sup>23</sup>

Flourishing, as a ‘development’ of some capacities (faculties, powers), is a process, therefore, in which ‘something’ grows (develops itself). For this reason, we think that flourishing needs a basis, a ‘ground’ from which it begins. We think that this basis is the ‘human nature’, human essence understood as a principle of operations. This common essence provides human being with faculties (powers) that realize their operations through the habits, the virtues. The statement of this basis makes the anthropology of flourishing more coherent. MacIntyre is not a metaphysician, but there are in his works – mainly in some of those written during the last 10–15 years – some references to metaphysical concepts (like the concept of ‘human nature’).<sup>24</sup>

Following Aquinas, MacIntyre places the basis of the individual’s unity in his psyche’s unity.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, we have to note that there is no ‘theory of the psyche’ in his works. Sometimes MacIntyre makes references to metaphysical concepts, and he acknowledges that these concepts are necessary to his thought.<sup>26</sup> MacIntyre talks about ‘being’, ‘essence’, etc. (although he does not do so in a systematic way).<sup>27</sup> He

1997, pp. 115–142. Rawls, for instance, thinks that there cannot be ‘one’ final end in a human being: “The self is disfigured and put in the service of one of its ends for the sake of system” (J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*..., p. 554).

<sup>20</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods*, „American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly” 1992, Vol. 66, No. 1, pp. 3–20. We use this reprint in this paper but we indicate the year of the first edition (in this reprint, there are some small changes). We can find a similar idea in the “Preface” to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *A Short History of Ethics: A Short History of Ethics*, New York 1966.

<sup>21</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1099b, 22. We use this Spanish edition: *Ética nicomáquea*, transl. P. Bonet, Madrid 1998.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, 1095a, 15; 1097a, 20; 1099a, 25.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 1097b, 21. Nevertheless, MacIntyre does not use the word ‘happiness’ but ‘flourishing’. When he published *After Virtue*, he did not know about the debate on the best translation of the Aristotelian concept of ‘eudaimonia’. Apart from this, he thinks that the word ‘flourishing’ is a good translation because it is coherent with Aristotle’s thought (and he refers to *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1098b, 20–22); A. MacIntyre, *Moral Rationality, Tradition, and Aristotle: a Reply to O. O’Neill, R. Gaita and Stephen R.L. Clark*, “Inquiry” 1983, Vol. 26, pp. 458, 462. This issue includes the contributions delivered in a conference on *After Virtue*.

<sup>24</sup> The word ‘nature’ (‘fisis’, ‘natura’) can have different meanings (see: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, 1014b15–1015a20; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 82, a. 1; I, q. 80, a. 1; I–II, q. 10, a. 1). About this books, we use the following editions: Aristotle, *Metafisica*, transl. G. Yebra, Madrid 1998; Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, transl. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 3 vols., New York 1947. Spanish translation used: *Suma de teología*, Madrid 2001; R. Luño, *Ética general*, 3rd ed., Pamplona 1998. Here we mean by ‘human nature’ the form of human being as a principle of operations. We take its metaphysical meaning: the being of a thing (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 82, a. 1; I, q. 80, a. 1), what defines a being specifically (I–II, q. 51, a. 1), the foundation of its faculties/powers (*ibidem*, I–II, q. 10, a. 1, ad 1; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 1014b15–1015a20).

<sup>25</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*..., pp. 197–200.

<sup>26</sup> For instance, in his paper *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods*..., p. 152.

<sup>27</sup> Idem, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*..., pp. 121–122; *First Principles, Final Ends and*



says that an Aristotelian Ethics needs a concept of 'human nature',<sup>28</sup> and talks about a human being's teleology, about flourishing, etc. However, he does not define a substantial concept of 'human nature', although we think that this is implicit ('behind') his thought. In fact, he says that Metaphysics (with concepts like 'potentia', 'substantia', etc.) is necessary for an Aristotelian-Thomistic framework,<sup>29</sup> within which he has developed his thought since he published *After Virtue*.<sup>30</sup>

Let us remember that, in *After Virtue*, MacIntyre said that the best explanation of Ethics was the Aristotelian one, an explanation based on a structure with three points: 1) human nature as it is; 2) human nature as it must be ('telos') according to its essence; 3) the way between both stages: Ethics.<sup>31</sup> We agree, therefore, with critics like J. L. A. García, T. Hibbs, Perreau-Saussine, J. Russell, C. Taylor or Lutz,<sup>32</sup> that there is in MacIntyre's thought a metaphysical concept of 'human nature',<sup>33</sup>

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*Contemporary Philosophical Issues...*, Milwaukee 1990, pp. 46–47. Spanish transl.: *Primeros principios, fines últimos y cuestiones filosóficas contemporáneas*, by A. Bayer, Madrid 2003.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, *After Virtue...*, pp. 52–53; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*, pp. 138–139.

<sup>29</sup> *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods...*, p. 152. A good example of this necessity is the change in MacIntyre's thought since *After Virtue*. Montoya and Matteini say that, in this book, he follows Aristotelian Ethics from a 'sociological' point of view, without accepting his 'biological metaphysics' (J. Montoya, *A propósito de "After Virtue"*, "Revista de filosofía" 1983, No. 6, p. 316; M. Matteini, *MacIntyre e la rifondazione dell'etica*, Roma 1995, p. 111). In fact, Gutting thinks that MacIntyre is not a true Aristotelian in *After Virtue* (G. Gutting, *Pragmatic Liberalism and the Critique of Modernity*, Cambridge 1999, p. 99). But, in *Dependent Rational Animals* (pp. ix–x), MacIntyre realized that it is a mistake to separate Ethics from Metaphysics in Aristotle. And he explained the same idea in an interview with Prof. Ricardo Yepes some years before, in 1990 (*Después de "Tras la virtud"*. Interview with R. Yepes, "Atlántida" 1990, Vol. 1, No. 4, p. 88).

<sup>30</sup> Lutz says that this same idea was explained by MacIntyre during a course on *After Virtue* in 1995 at Notre Dame University. In this same course, MacIntyre said that *After Virtue* did not include a good explanation on the concept of 'human nature' (C. S. Lutz, *Tradition in Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre*, New York 2004, p. 134). We thank Dr. David Solomon, Dr. Dan McInerney and Dr. John O'Callaghan for their comments on this issue.

<sup>31</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue...*, pp. 52–53.

<sup>32</sup> J. L. A. García, *Modern(ist) Moral Philosophy and MacIntyrean Critique*, [in:] *Alasdair MacIntyre...*, p. 108; T. S. Hibbs, *MacIntyre's postmodern Thomism: reflections on "Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry"*, "The Thomist" 1993, Vol. 57, p. 285; É. Perreau-Saussine, *Alasdair MacIntyre between Aristotle and Marx*, [in:] [www.src.uchicago.edu/politicaltheory.sausine99.pdf](http://www.src.uchicago.edu/politicaltheory.sausine99.pdf); J. Russell, *On MacIntyre*, Belmont 2003, p. 36; C. Taylor, *Justice After Virtue*, [in:] *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, eds. J. Horton and S. Mendus, Cambridge 1994; C. S. Lutz, *Tradition in Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre...*, pp. 120, 139–140.

<sup>33</sup> Some reasons for stating this idea:

- 1) The change in MacIntyre's thought since *After Virtue* in accepting Aristotelian metaphysics (and Thomistic metaphysics later).
- 2) The idea – already explained – that the human being has/shows, in its acts and life, a 'proto-Aristotelian' structure. An Aristotelian Ethics, therefore, implies an Aristotelian metaphysics (A. MacIntyre, *On Not Having the Last Word: Thoughts on our Debts to Gadamer*, [in:] *Gadamer's Century. Essays in Honour of H.-G. Gadamer*, eds. J. Malpas, U. von Amswald and J. Kertscher, Boston 2002, p. 169).
- 3) The idea that flourishing is the development of faculties/capacities that the human being has as a human being. This idea assumes (perhaps implicitly) the conceptual structure through which Aquinas explains the human being, a structure based on the concepts of 'essence', 'faculty/power' and 'operation' (Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 75, a. 1).
- 4) Sometimes MacIntyre talks about 'human nature' as the foundation of natural law and also as the basis of human capacities and inclinations (idem, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*, p. 134; *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods...*, p. 139; *How Can We Learn What "Veritatis Splendor" Has to*

Nevertheless, human nature acts and develops itself in specific practices. Another important feature of flourishing is that it is mainly a 'practical' process, i.e. it takes place in specific practices. The concept of 'practice' is very important in MacIntyre's thought.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre defines the practice as "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". Sciences, architecture, and farming are examples of practices.<sup>34</sup>

The elements of a practice according to MacIntyre are three: goods, models of excellence (or authorities) and rules.<sup>35</sup> Let us briefly consider each one of them. Regarding goods, he distinguishes between two kinds of them: "external goods" and "internal goods". The internal ones are those goods referred to the proper excellence of a concrete practice. The best building and the best way to design it are internal goods to architecture. Moreover, the external ones are those goods not related directly to the proper excellence of a practice. This kind of goods can be achieved through many kinds of practices and can be independent of the achievement of the internal goods to the practice. These goods are money, power, prestige and so on. Therefore, internal goods are the proper or essential 'telos' of a practice.<sup>36</sup>

Rules are necessary elements of a practice because they are the guidelines or the norms to be followed by the individual if he wants to achieve the internal goods to the practices.<sup>37</sup> Some rules have to be observed because they take the individual to excellence in a practice. It is necessary, for instance, to train weekly if we want to form a good football team.

The third element of practices is models or authorities. According to MacIntyre, they are necessary because the individual needs to know the rules and the goods of the practices, and also has to learn to apply the rules and realize the internal good. Individuals need some people to learn and to practice these elements: they

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*Teach?*, "The Thomist" 1994, Vol. 58, p. 173; *Aquinas's Critique of Education: Against His Own Age, Against Ours*, [in:] *Philosophers on Education: New Historical Perspectives*, ed. A. Oksenberg Rorty, London–New York 1998, p. 98; *Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity*, [in:] *Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*, ed. E. B. McLean, Delaware 2000, pp. 108, 109, 113). Nevertheless, we have to say MacIntyre's references to the concept of 'human nature' are not always clear or systematic. For instance, when he describes different fields or aspects of human existence (biological, social, etc.), sometimes he talks about 'human natures': "in ihrer Anwendung auf mensch Wesen...", "menschliche Wesen" – he says in an interview with D. Nikulin (A. MacIntyre, "Wahre Selbsterkenntnis durch Verstehen unserer selbst aus der Perspektive anderer". Interview with Dmitri Nikulin, "Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie" 1996, Vol. 44, No. 4, p. 676), or also we can read "our natures" in *How Can We Learn What "Veritatis Splendor" Has to Teach?...*, p. 177.

<sup>34</sup> Idem, *After Virtue...*, pp. 187–188, 200–201.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 189–190.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 184–194; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*, pp. 64–65.

<sup>37</sup> Idem, *After Virtue...*, pp. 194–195; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London 1998, pp. 31–32.



are the models or authorities.<sup>38</sup> Finally, we can mention that virtues are the qualities through which the individual can distinguish and realize the internal goods to the practice, and follow the models and the rules related to it. According to MacIntyre, there are some virtues without which the individual cannot achieve the internal goods to the practice: justice, prudence, etc.<sup>39</sup>

For MacIntyre, practices are the natural field or place where individuals act and live. Social and individual life is structured by practices, which take place in some institutions and in a specific history or tradition. Every practice is part of a history and a tradition. An individual life is composed of many practices: someone can act as a father, as a lawyer, as a member of different associations, and so on. This is why human action cannot be explained from an individualistic point of view, i.e. as a result of 'independent' individual choices.

The relationship between practice, with its internal good, and flourishing is very important. In *After Virtue*, McIntyre of course realizes that there are practices which are evil in themselves: for instance, torture, sadomasochistic sexuality, etc. A thief can be good as a thief and, as a result, he is bad as a human being. Technical perfection does not imply moral perfection.<sup>40</sup> And this distinction is based on the concept of flourishing, from which we can judge practices.

Because of this, MacIntyre distinguishes between three meanings of the concept of *good*:

- 1) *Good* as a means to another good, which is a good in itself.
- 2) *Good* according to a specific practice. In this sense, an individual is good as a father, as a teacher and so on.<sup>41</sup>
- 3) *Good* as a human being, as a member of human species. In this sense, an individual is good if he is flourishing as such.<sup>42</sup> In fact, this third sense of the concept is the main one for MacIntyre: something is good for an individual if it contributes to his flourishing.<sup>43</sup>

For MacIntyre, a judgment on human flourishing is a judgment about whether an individual has developed human faculties. Because of this, he says that his concept of good is a 'functional' concept. This is a factual statement: it is a judgment on the fact of the flourishing itself, rather than a subjective judgment. He argues that we cannot define what a 'watch' is without the idea of a 'good watch', which implies a specific function. So just as we cannot define 'watch' without the

<sup>38</sup> *Idem*, *After Virtue*..., p. 195.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 195–196; *Nietzsche O Aristotele?*, [in:] *Conversazioni Americane*, ed. G. Borradori, Roma–Bari 1991, pp. 169–187. English transl.: *Nietzsche or Aristotle?*, [in:] *The American Philosopher: Conversations with Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell, MacIntyre, and Kuhn*, ed. G. Borradori, Chicago 1994, pp. 137–152. Spanish transl.: *Nietzsche o Aristóteles?*, [in:] *Conversaciones filosóficas (El nuevo pensamiento norteamericano)*, transl. J. A. Mejía, Santafé de Bogotá 1996, pp. 199–219.

<sup>40</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*..., pp. 200–203.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*, *Dependent Rational Animals*..., pp. 65–66.

<sup>42</sup> *Idem*, *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods*..., p. 151; *Dependent Rational Animals*..., p. 66.

<sup>43</sup> I would like to thank Prof. MacIntyre for a personal conversation on this issue.

concept of 'good watch', it is impossible to define what a human being is without the idea of a 'good human being', i.e. without the idea of flourishing, which is its proper function.<sup>44</sup> For this reason MacIntyre says that we cannot separate 'to be' and 'ought to be', at least in 'functional' concepts.<sup>45</sup>

Fuller calls this scheme the '*form-function-virtue scheme*', and says that MacIntyre takes it from Plato, Aristotle and Aquinas. They share the same scheme: a natural form ('*eidōs*') implies a function ('*ergon*') proper of the being that possesses this form, a function whose fulfillment is its final good ('*happiness*'), good that is achieved through virtues.<sup>46</sup> According to Wong, an important point in Greek and Medieval philosophy is that the human being "is understood to have an essential nature or function".<sup>47</sup> This would be the only basis for moral objectivity that MacIntyre searches for.<sup>48</sup> Let us remember that, for Aristotle, human nature is not only an essence but also an end, the '*telos*' of the human being.<sup>49</sup>

We have said that every practice has its own rules. The individual has to assume them and follow them if he wants to achieve the internal good to the practice. We have seen that practices can be judged and understood only from flourishing. Just as there are rules for practices, there are also rules for flourishing. These rules are the rules of natural law.<sup>50</sup> The individual has to observe them in order to achieve flourishing as a human being.<sup>51</sup> Just as flourishing is the reference from which to judge practices, natural law is the reference from which to judge practices' rules. For MacIntyre, the good is the sense of rules: without the idea of good to be achieved, rules do not make sense.<sup>52</sup> According to the MacIntyrean scheme, we can

<sup>44</sup> *Idem*, *After Virtue*..., pp. 57–61.

<sup>45</sup> *Idem*, pp. 57–61; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*..., pp. 134–135; see also: *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods*..., pp. 138–139; *Wahre Selbsterkenntnis durch Verstehen unserer selbst aus der Perspektive anderer*..., pp. 676–677.

<sup>46</sup> M. Fuller, *Making Sense of MacIntyre*, Aldershot 1998, p. 5.

<sup>47</sup> D. B. Wong, *Virtue-Centered and Rights-Centered Moralities*, [in:] *Moral Relativity*, Berkeley 1984, p. 136.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1252b 8–9; we use this Spanish edition: *Política*, transl. G. Valdés, Madrid 1999, 2nd ed. We think that, for MacIntyre (although he does not use these words), finally the good is essentially what perfects or improves a nature (like for Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I–II, q. 54, a. 3, ad 2), and, therefore, that towards which this nature tends (*ibidem*, I–II, q. 1, a. 4; Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 983a, 32; *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, 1094a, 2–3; X, 1173a, 1).

<sup>50</sup> Natural law is a topic with which MacIntyre has dealt mainly in papers or articles.

<sup>51</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*..., p. 139; *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods*..., p. 143; *How Can We Learn What "Veritatis Splendor" Has to Teach?*..., p. 173; *Wahre Selbsterkenntnis durch Verstehen unserer selbst aus der Perspektive anderer*..., pp. 676–677; *Dependent Rational Animals*..., pp. ix–x; *The Privatization of Good. An Inaugural Lecture*, "The Review of Politics" 1994, Vol. 52, No. 3, p. 344. Inaugural lecture for MacMahon-Hank Chair of University Notre Dame, reprinted in: *The Liberalism-Communitarianism Debate: Liberty and Community Values*, ed. C. F. Delaney, Lanham 1994, pp. 1–17. German transl.: *Die Privatisierung des Guten*, [in:] *Pathologien des Sozialen: Die Aufgaben der Sozialphilosophie*, ed. A. Honneth, Frankfurt a. M. 1994, pp. 163–83.

<sup>52</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*..., pp. 194–195; *The Privatization of Good. An Inaugural Lecture*..., p. 344; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*..., p. 139; *Plain Persons and Moral Philosophy: Rules, Virtues and Goods*..., p. 143; *Dependent Rational Animals*..., pp. ix–x.

see that human autonomy acts under the guide of rules that do not come from it (from individual autonomy).

MacIntyre, following Aquinas, thinks that common human nature is the only foundation for natural law, and that this law implies and is directed to the final 'telos' of human being.<sup>53</sup> However, he thinks that the most difficult thing in the reflection on natural law is perhaps how to know and to define the precepts of that natural law.<sup>54</sup>

For our author, natural law can be known and defined only from social practices, that is to say, from those activities in which the individual participates and which take place in a community.<sup>55</sup> In his paper "Natural Law Reconsidered" (of 1997), MacIntyre agrees with Aquinas in deriving natural law from inclinations of human nature,<sup>56</sup> as we can read in *Summa Theologica*.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, he prefers another way to natural law.<sup>58</sup>

MacIntyre tells us that, for Aquinas,<sup>59</sup> an essential feature of any precept which is a law is that it is a rule of reason directed to the common good. MacIntyre derives from this idea that, in order to define the good – and the goods – and the rules, the very inclinations of human nature are not enough. Perhaps it is better to start with actions, debates and discussions about goods and rules which happen in practices when people are concerned about any common good.<sup>60</sup> Reflection and enquiry come after this fact, the *fact of the practice*, and then goods and rules necessary for everybody are found by people involved in these practices.<sup>61</sup>

In fact, MacIntyre thinks that this argument was proposed implicitly by Aquinas, since ordinary people at first do not derive natural law from metaphysical premises.<sup>62</sup> If human nature is known through its operations and through the actions

<sup>53</sup> Idem, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*, p. 133; *Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity...*, p. 113.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, *Natural Law Reconsidered*. Review of "Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law: An Analytic Reconstruction", by A. J. Lisska, "International Philosophical Quarterly" 1994, Vol. 37, No. 1, issue 145, p. 98; *Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity...*, p. 95.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, *Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights*, "Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture" 1994, Vol. 26, No. 2, p. 110; *The Theses on Feuerbach: A Road Not Taken*, [in:] *Artifacts, Representations and Social Practice*, eds. C. C. Gould and R. S. Cohen, Dordrecht 1998, pp. 277–290. Also: *Natural Law As Subversive: The Case of Aquinas*, "Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies" 1998, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 80–81; *Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity...*, pp. 109–110.

<sup>56</sup> Idem, *Natural Law Reconsidered...*, pp. 98–99.

<sup>57</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I–II, q. 94, a. 2. He describes that argument in his paper *Natural Law Reconsidered...* (pp. 98–99): the human being has some "dispositional properties", which tend to some goods and "fulfillments", but only through reason and will. The rules of natural law are the references for this process, for human flourishing.

<sup>58</sup> I would like to thank Prof. MacIntyre for a personal conversation about this issue (August 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I–II, q. 90, a. 1–2.

<sup>60</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Natural Law Reconsidered...*, pp. 98–99.

<sup>61</sup> Idem, *Después de Tras la virtud...*, p. 93; *Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity...*, pp. 94–95. MacIntyre mentions the role of the 'sinderesis' (in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*, p. 194), but he does not analyze it.

<sup>62</sup> Idem, *Natural Law Reconsidered...*, p. 98.

realized by an individual, the practices are really important because they are the field or the context of those actions.<sup>63</sup> This is why MacIntyre concludes that: “the recognition of natural law is a matter of how such practices are structured”.<sup>64</sup>

The MacIntyrean concept of ‘virtue’ can be understood only from the concepts explained so far: ‘practice’ and ‘flourishing’. Starting from the concepts of ‘flourishing’ (‘narrative unity’) and ‘practice’, MacIntyre gradually defines the concept of ‘virtue’ in *After Virtue* and *Dependent Rational Animals*.<sup>65</sup> Virtues help human beings both in practices and in searching for the good: “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 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 good”.<sup>66</sup>

Complementarily, MacIntyre says, in *Dependent Rational Animals*, that virtues are ‘excellences’; they are “those qualities of mind and character that enable someone both to recognize the relevant goods and to use the relevant skills in achieving them”.<sup>67</sup> We can see, therefore, that virtues are shown and have influence on all fields of individual life. Virtues are developed in practices, but their influence goes beyond them: life as a whole (with its ‘telos’).<sup>68</sup> Virtues, therefore, are necessary qualities for humans in order to see (to grasp) the good and also to apply the rules, in the fields of both practices and flourishing. The individual can define flourishing as the greatest good and the specific goods related to it only through its virtues, among which ‘phronesis’ plays an essential role.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Idem, *The Theses on Feuerbach: A Road Not Taken...*, p. 234; *Natural Law As Subversive: The Case of Aquinas...*, pp. 80–81; *Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity...*, pp. 94–95, 109–110.

<sup>64</sup> Idem, *Natural Law As Subversive: The Case of Aquinas...*, pp. 80–81. Although MacIntyre does not talk about natural law in his paper published in 1978, and published again in 1985, *The Right to Die Garrulously*, he pays attention to the fact that rules exist in specific practices and communities (idem, *The Right to Die Garrulously*, [in:] *Death and Decision*, ed. E. McMullin, Boulder 1985, pp. 76, 83–84). As an example of this argument, we can look at what MacIntyre calls the “ethics of enquiry”, which is involved in the practice of moral and political debate. He defines it as “an additional authority that is independent of moral standpoint” (idem, *Toleration and the goods of conflict*, [in:] *The Politics of Toleration in Modern Life*, ed. S. Mendus, Durham 2000, pp. 133–155). We thank the author for a copy of this paper and also his comments on it. And it is part of natural law (idem, *How Can We Learn What “Veritatis Splendor” Has to Teach?*..., pp. 171–195). (We use here references taken from different papers. MacIntyre does not unify them explicitly but the relationship between them seems coherent with his arguments.) The liberty to express an opinion, the respect for people participating in the debate and so on: all of these are principles or virtues which form that ‘ethics of enquiry’. MacIntyre says that a true dialogue, a proper human dialogue, implies the acceptance of the ethics of enquiry. Perhaps someone does not define or state explicitly these rules but he is implicitly accepting them when he joins a public debate on moral or political issues (idem, *Toleration and the goods of conflict...*, p. 7).

<sup>65</sup> Idem, *After Virtue...*, p. 181; *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 91–92. For an analysis of MacIntyrean concept of ‘virtue’ in *After Virtue*, *Whose Justice?* and *Three Rival Versions*, see: M. Mauri, *Liberalisme i llibertat. Alasdair MacIntyre: la tradició de les virtuts*, “Qüestions de vida cristiana” 1997, No. 194, pp. 45–56.

<sup>66</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue...*, p. 219.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>68</sup> Idem, *After Virtue...*, pp. 201–203.

<sup>69</sup> Idem, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 115–116; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*,

We can see, therefore, that MacIntyrean 'independence' is not an individualistic independence. We can say that it is a 'dependent independence'. And it is dependent in its basis/grounds (the common human nature), in its end (flourishing) and in its means (virtues). Because of the features of the concepts of 'practice' and 'flourishing', the individual needs the help of others in order to define and to realize the good. The individual needs the help of others to learn the rules of practices (and how to apply them) and also to develop virtues (something necessary in order to achieve the internal goods to practices). The same happens in the whole process of flourishing. That is why, according to MacIntyre, human actions cannot be explained fully from an individualistic point of view.

We can thus understand the importance of the concept of 'community' in MacIntyre's thought. According to him, community is the natural context of human flourishing. Without a community, the individual cannot achieve independence in practical reasoning. In this section, we will analyze why MacIntyre says this.

The MacIntyrean concept of 'community' comes from the Greek 'polis'.<sup>70</sup> In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* he defines it as follows: "The 'polis' is defined functionally as that form of human association whose peculiar 'telos' is the realization of good as such, a form of association therefore inclusive of all forms of association whose 'telos' is the realization of this or that particular good".<sup>71</sup> 'Society', therefore, is also a functional concept. MacIntyre defines it from its proper function, which is the realization of good as such (its 'telos').

Flourishing is a process of physical and intellectual development in which the individual develops faculties as a human being and also as an individual, something impossible without the help of others. In order to achieve maturity, the individual needs the care of many people (relatives, friends, etc.) Corporal and intellectual maturity would be impossible without this care. The individual starts learning about good, practices, virtues, etc. in that context. This is why MacIntyre says that the individual's moral is primarily a particular/communitarian moral.<sup>72</sup>

Besides, once the individual has achieved corporal and moral maturity (once he has achieved independence in practical reasoning), there is always danger of damaging it. In the corporal field, the individual's integrity can be hurt at any time, even to the extent that he loses his natural independence. The same happens in the intellectual/moral field: the individual can always make mistakes that damage his flourishing. This fact is called 'vulnerability' by MacIntyre: the individual always lives in a 'vulnerability condition'. This is why 'disability' is an essential feature of the human being. Consequently, the human being is always a 'dependent' being.

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pp. 130–131, 139; *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues...*, pp. 35–36, 41–42; *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 159–161.

<sup>70</sup> Idem, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 122–123; *Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good*, [in:] *The MacIntyre Reader*, ed. K. Knight, Cambridge 1998, pp. 241–243. In this paper, we indicate the pages of the English translation but indicate the year of the original version.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 122–123.

<sup>72</sup> Idem, *After Virtue...*, pp. 265–267.

Vulnerability and dependency are, therefore, essential features of human existence.<sup>73</sup> It is worth remembering the title of the book – *‘Dependent’ Rational Animals*.

Individual identity is, consequently, an identity which is formed socially. The self develops within a context of personal relationships.<sup>74</sup> Other people help the individual in his self-knowledge: the individual knows himself because others know him.<sup>75</sup> Because of these facts, MacIntyre says that the individual never possesses himself totally, and is never totally independent from the rest, as Individualism states. That is why our author says: “Acknowledgment of dependence is the key to independence”.<sup>76</sup>

Besides, within the community, the proper and specific context of individual flourishing is what MacIntyre calls “relationships of giving and receiving”. He also talks about another kind of relationship: “hierarchies of power” (or relationships of “distribution of power”). These last relationships are those dedicated to the community’s government (or management), and they have their own rules. They are instrumental relationships and they are necessary to maintain order and institutions in society.<sup>77</sup> However ‘relationships of giving and receiving’ are much more important because they are ‘personal’ relationships: family, friends, etc. They are the primary context of human flourishing. Only in these relationships can the individual receive the necessary care to be able to flourish. Human vulnerability and dependency require relationships ‘of giving and receiving’. Only through these relationships may the human being overcome his natural vulnerability.<sup>78</sup> This is possible because these relationships are ruled by the virtue of ‘just generosity’.

The virtue of ‘just generosity’ is an essential virtue for understanding human flourishing. It unifies justice and generosity. The relationships based on this virtue include affections. In them, the individual can give or receive more than he gives or receives; individual capacities, necessity and circumstances are taken into account, etc.<sup>79</sup> Thus we can understand that, according to MacIntyre, the individual good and the common good are not opposite to each other, but have a close need for each other. In the anthropology of flourishing, common good is not a summing of individual interests – as Individualism states – but a way of communitarian life that helps individuals to achieve their flourishing.<sup>80</sup> “That common good is always the good of some whole of which the individuals are parts and it is more and other than a summing of individual goods”.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Idem, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 2–3, 72–73, 84–85, 91–92.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 94–95; *Medicine Aimed at the Care of Persons Rather Than What...?*, [in:] *Changing Values in Medicine*, eds. E. J. Cassell and M. Siegler, Maryland 1979, p. 95.

<sup>75</sup> Idem, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 94–95.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 84–85.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 102–103.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 99, 103, 128.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 99–100, 119–121, 123–126.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, *Aquinas’s Critique of Education...*, p. 100; *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 109–110, 119.

<sup>81</sup> Idem, *Aquinas’s Critique of Education...*, p. 100.



Therefore, the community flourishes also as a whole, and it flourishes insofar as its individuals flourish, that is to say, insofar as virtues are embodied in social relationships (just generosity specially). Society's 'telos' is not only the realization of good as such.<sup>82</sup> "So the good of each cannot be pursued without also pursuing the good of all those who participate in those relationships. For we cannot have a practically adequate understanding of our own good, of our own flourishing, apart from and independently of the flourishing of that whole set of social relationships in which we have found our place".<sup>83</sup>

Relationships 'of giving and receiving' are the proper relationships of Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft*, and they can exist only in small communities, which cannot take place – argues MacIntyre – in modern State structures (which are related to Tönnies' *Gesellschaft*). The values and relationships of communities cannot be embodied by the State's institutions. MacIntyre says that some communitarianist authors think that it is possible that the modern State's institutions embody or assume the values of 'community', something impossible according to him. That is why MacIntyre, in his famous paper "I'm not a communitarian, but...", does not accept that critics consider him to be a communitarianist.<sup>84</sup>

According to MacIntyre, communities cannot exist in a modern State as they existed (albeit in an imperfect way) in previous societies. Nevertheless, it is possible to try to reinforce and to develop relationships in small groups that share a good on a particular level (like hospitals, parishes, workplaces, etc.), or even in small groups with different moralities but in search of any specific good.<sup>85</sup> Communitarian moral (what Hegel called *Sittlichkeit*) is essentially different from state moral (*Moralität*).<sup>86</sup>

The MacIntyrean concept of 'community', therefore, has a narrower meaning than the communitarianist concept – as J. C. Elvira notes.<sup>87</sup> We agree with De la Torre that the population in a MacIntyrean community can be made up of hundreds

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<sup>82</sup> Idem, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 108–109. On the contrary, Rawls defines 'society' in his book *A Theory of Justice* (p. 4) as follows: "a society is a more or less self-sufficient association of persons who in their relations to one another recognize certain rules of conduct as binding and who for the most part act in accordance with them. Suppose further that these rules specify a system of cooperation designed to advance the good of those taking part in it. Then, although a society is a cooperative venture for mutual advantage, it is typically marked by a conflict as well as by an identity of interests. [...] A set of principles is required for choosing among the various social arrangements which determine this division of advantages and for underwriting and agreement on the proper distributive shares. These principles are the principles of social justice: they provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation".

<sup>83</sup> Idem, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 107–108.

<sup>84</sup> Idem, *I'm Not a Communitarian, but...*, "The Responsive Community", Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 91–92; *Después de Tras la virtud...*, pp. 91–92.

<sup>85</sup> Idem, *I'm Not a Communitarian...*

<sup>86</sup> Idem, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 142–143.

<sup>87</sup> J. C. Elvira, *Práctica de la virtud e ideal ilustrado*, [in:] *Crisis de valores. Modernidad y tradición* (*Un profundo estudio de la obra de A. MacIntyre*), eds. M. Mauri, B. Román et al., Barcelona 1997, p. 25.

or thousands of people, but not of a million.<sup>88</sup> According to MacIntyre, this kind of community is a group between family and State, since the family needs a bigger group to exist, but this ‘group’ is not the modern State.<sup>89</sup> Although MacIntyre sometimes does not provide good examples in order to explain better his concept of ‘community’, we think that it is clear that it implies a new paradigm, one called by Etzioni “the I and We paradigm”.<sup>90</sup> And we agree with Carsillo that this paradigm implies a “redefinition of the individual” (“una ridefinizione del soggetto”).<sup>91</sup>

In part II, we have seen that, in the anthropology of flourishing, individual autonomy cannot be an ‘end’ (‘telos’) in an individualistic sense. In the light of the concept of ‘community’ explained in this part, we can again say that individual autonomy cannot be the ‘principle’ of human development. The principle of flourishing is not an independent autonomy but, we can say, a set of ‘co-principles’: human nature – explained in the previous section – and also a family, a community. The human being’s independence cannot be, therefore, an individualistic independence.

Nevertheless, community cannot be understood on its own. According to MacIntyre, community (with its practices and concepts) can be understood only in the light of a particular history. MacIntyre deals with this fact through his concept of ‘tradition’.

### **Tradition: ‘narrative rationality’**

The concept of ‘tradition’ is perhaps the most famous concept in MacIntyre’s thought. In his book *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, he defines ‘tradition’ with the following words: “an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition [...], and those internal”.<sup>92</sup> The elements of a tradition are, therefore, three: an argument through time, and some fundamental agreements and conflicts (external and internal).

For MacIntyre, tradition is the global context from which a community’s concepts and practices can be understood. Although ‘tradition’ can have a narrow meaning, related only to a specific field (science, arts etc.), we think that it offers rather a ‘worldview’, i.e. a global view of the human being and the world.<sup>93</sup> This view includes, for example, religious, scientific, practical elements.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>88</sup> Fco. J. de la Torre Díaz, *El modelo de diálogo intercultural de A. MacIntyre*, Madrid 2001, p. 38.

<sup>89</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals...*, pp. 134–136.

<sup>90</sup> A. Etzioni, *Toward an I & We Paradigm*, “Contemporary Sociology” 1989, Vol. 18, p. 173.

<sup>91</sup> R. Carsillo, *Il problema morale in MacIntyre*, Bari 2000, p. 349.

<sup>92</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 12–13.

<sup>93</sup> We think that ‘worldview’ is the best translation into English of the German concept ‘Weltanschauung’ (‘cosmovisión’ in Spanish).

<sup>94</sup> Because of that ‘global’ character, some critics think that MacIntyre does not define accurately what a ‘tradition’ is, but rather he only puts some examples related to different fields (J. Annas, *MacIntyre on Tradi-*

A worldview, because of its global character, does not have a meaning related only to one part of reality: it is a whole which unifies many kinds of elements so that, at the same time, it is formed by them (scientific and ethical theories, practices, religion, etc.). This whole is what MacIntyre tries to show and analyze through the concept of 'tradition' and also through his reflection on different traditions. We are dealing, therefore, with a 'flexible' and dynamic concept; a concept that can be defined so that, at the same time, it is not a 'closed' but an 'open' concept. That is why we disagree with some critics in relating this concept only to one field or aspect of reality.<sup>95</sup>

A tradition explains the theoretical and practical concepts of a community. The individual learns about the good and carries out the realization of that good in a communitarian debate, which includes both theoretical and practical elements that can be understood only within a specific tradition.<sup>96</sup> We think that this fact can be called the individual's 'extended and secondary dependency': in order to achieve flourishing, the individual depends on a community, and, at the same time, it depends on a tradition, which is 'embodied' in its community.

According to MacIntyre, that fact implies clearly that theoretical and practical principles of human rationality are 'principles' only within/for a specific tradition: they make sense only in this context.<sup>97</sup> In this sense, MacIntyrean 'tradition' would be similar to Kuhn's 'scientific paradigm'.<sup>98</sup> At the same time, MacIntyre thinks that human rationality is a virtues-informed rationality. And individual virtues are developed in practices, which take place in a tradition. That is why Ma-

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tions. *Review of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, "Philosophy and Public Affairs 1989", Vol. 18, No. 4, p. 389; J. Porter, *Tradition in the Recent Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, [in:] *Alasdair MacIntyre...*, p. 38; P. de Greiff, *MacIntyre: narrativa y tradición*, "Sistema" 1989, Vol. 92, pp. 113–115. Apart from this, some critics think that, although he defines a tradition, he is not accurate in describing some specific traditions. Fco J. De La Torre, *El modelo de diálogo intercultural de A. MacIntyre...*, p. 25; S. Mulhall, *Liberalism, Morality and Rationality: MacIntyre, Rawls and Cavell*, [in:] *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*, eds. J. Horton and S. Mendus, Cambridge 1994, p. 224; C. Thiebaut, *Los límites de la comunidad*, Madrid 1992, p. 111; M. Herrera, *Racionalidad y justicia: en torno a la obra de MacIntyre*, "Sistema" 1989, Vol. 91, p. 45; J. Annas, *MacIntyre on Traditions...*, pp. 391–392; B. W. Ballard, *Understanding MacIntyre*, Lanham 2000, p. 59; A. Bielsa, *Crítica a MacIntyre: una lectura kantiana*, [in:] *Crisis de valores...*, pp. 107–112; P. Kelly, *MacIntyre's Critique of Utilitarianism*, [in:] *After MacIntyre...*, p. 132; T. H. Irwin, *Tradition and Reason in the History of Ethics*, "Social Philosophy and Policy" 1989, Vol. 7, issue 1, pp. 66–67. We agree, to some extent, with these critics, although, on the contrary, we think – like M. Mauri, *Autoridad y tradición*, [in:] *Crisis de valores...* p. 7 – that through MacIntyre's examples and explanations (and the definition quoted above) we can reach (at least) a general view of what he means by 'tradition'.

<sup>95</sup> Fco J. De La Torre, *El modelo de diálogo intercultural de A. MacIntyre...*, p. 25; J. Porter, *Tradition in the Recent Work of Alasdair MacIntyre...*, pp. 53–56.

<sup>96</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science*, "The Monist" 1977, Vol. 60, p. 462; *After Virtue...*, pp. 219–222; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*, pp. 201–202.

<sup>97</sup> Idem, *Are there any natural rights?*, Brunswick 1983, p. 15; *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 252–253; *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues...*, p. 30.

<sup>98</sup> Fco J. De La Torre, *El modelo de diálogo intercultural de A. MacIntyre...*, p. 115; R. Stern, *MacIntyre and Historicism*, [in:] *After MacIntyre...*, pp. 146–147; A. Llano, *Presentación to Tres versiones rivales de la ética*, Spanish version of *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry...*, p. 15.

MacIntyre says that any Ethics is an Ethics of a particular tradition:<sup>99</sup> “Morality which is no particular society’s morality is to be found nowhere”.<sup>100</sup>

These ideas have led some critics to consider MacIntyre to be a historicist.<sup>101</sup> If this is right, MacIntyre would have replaced ‘sociologism’ or ‘communitarianism’ by something more general, ‘traditionalism’; but it is not only a kind of historicism. Thus MacIntyre would not overcome relativism, since, in traditionalism, tradition would play the same role as culture or society in relativism. In this way, what we have called ‘anthropology of flourishing’ (with its universal moral principles) would not be able to show what a human being is, but would show only what a human being is in the particular tradition that MacIntyre shares, the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition.

This important critique would be coherent with one of the most important features of traditions according to MacIntyre: every tradition is justified by its own (internal) moral and practical principles.<sup>102</sup> And the strongest and most coherent tradition so far would be the Thomistic tradition.<sup>103</sup> In this way, the world would be composed by a set of closed, ‘untranslatable’ and independent traditions in conflict.

However we think that this view is only a partial view of the MacIntyrean concept of ‘tradition’. Although it is true that a tradition survives because of its resources to solve (internal and external) problems, the main criterion/reference for a tradition would be reality, that is to say, the being of the things. Internal consistency would be necessary but not enough. Therefore, a specific tradition overcomes other traditions because it finally offers the best and a more complete explanation about reality and the human being.<sup>104</sup>

In his book *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*, discussing different kinds of rational justification, MacIntyre says that the final ‘telos’ for a demonstrative theory is the truth. According to MacIntyre, to understand is the necessary coincidence between the form of intellect and the form of the thing understood.<sup>105</sup> He takes, therefore, the Aristotelian-Thomistic conception

<sup>99</sup> A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*..., pp. 221–222.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 265–267.

<sup>101</sup> A. Bielsa, *Crítica a MacIntyre: una lectura kantiana*..., p. 84; C. Thiebaut, *Los límites de la comunidad*..., p. 117; J. Haldane, *MacIntyre’s Thomist Revival: What Next?*, [in:] *After MacIntyre*..., p. 105; B. Román, *La propuesta comunitarista de A. MacIntyre*, [in:] *Crisis de valores*..., p. 80.

<sup>102</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 252–253, 357–358; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*..., pp. 124–125; *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*..., p. 15, 32; *Dependent Rational Animals*..., pp. 77–78, 156–157.

<sup>103</sup> *Idem*, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., p. 403; *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*..., pp. 47–48, 55–56; *A Partial Response to My Critics*, [in:] *After MacIntyre*..., p. 298.

<sup>104</sup> *Idem*, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 357–358; *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*..., pp. 121–122; *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*..., p. 44; Aquinas’s *Critique of Education*..., p. 104; *Moral Pluralism Without Moral Relativism*, “Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy” 1999, Vol. 1, pp. 5–6; *Truth as a Good: a reflection on “Fides et Ratio”*, [in:] *Thomas Aquinas: Approaches to Truth*, eds. J. McEvoy and M. Dunne, Dublin 2002, pp. 153–154. We thank Prof. MacIntyre for a manuscript of this paper and his comments on it and help.

<sup>105</sup> A. MacIntyre, *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*..., pp. 44, 28.

of the truth: “the adequacy of the intellect to its objects”.<sup>106</sup> This is the proper ‘telos’ of every theoretical activity of human reason.<sup>107</sup>

“Adequatio intellectus et rei”: This is the second meaning of ‘truth’ that Aquinas describes in *De veritate* (q. I, a. 1), because something can be true with respect to divine intellect and also with respect to human intellect.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, MacIntyre’s philosophical enquiry is a traditional enquiry whose ‘telos’ is “a relationship of the mind to its objects which would be wholly adequate in respect to the capacities of that mind”.<sup>109</sup> Truth is the proper and essential good of human intellect and, consequently, the proper good of a tradition.<sup>110</sup>

Regarding Ethics and practical reasoning, the conclusion that can be deduced from these ideas is clear for MacIntyre: moral principles (both positive and negative) are at the same time both universal and traditional principles. That is to say: natural law affects all human beings but knowledge, definition and application of its principles depend on (and occur in) a particular tradition. This is why MacIntyre thinks that the individual can know universal moral principles only through practices, which are always particular and traditional (think of the example of the ‘ethics of enquiry’). For MacIntyre, that is the true/correct Thomistic view of natural law.

For this reason, there are traditions that make easier than others the individual’s moral development and knowledge of reality. That is why we say that MacIntyrean rationality is a ‘narrative rationality’: it tends to the definition of universal principles, but its way or process of stating them is not universal but particular, and it depends on the features and on the development of a particular tradition. We can say that, for MacIntyre, the access to being is not language but tradition.

In the anthropology of flourishing, therefore, the individual is not ‘shut’ in his community and tradition (although this can happen), but can go beyond them. If it were like this, MacIntyre could not define a concept of ‘tradition’ that can be applied to different traditions in a ‘transtraditional’ way – as many critics have noted.<sup>111</sup>

In our opinion, this process of abstraction and reflection as well as the universal applicability of some concepts are based only on a common concept of ‘human nature’. MacIntyre does not state it explicitly, but we think that this idea is coherent

<sup>106</sup> Idem, *Truth as a Good: a reflection on “Fides et Ratio”*..., pp. 153–154.

<sup>107</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*..., 993b 20–21.

<sup>108</sup> A. MacIntyre, *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*..., p. 33. In Aquinas, this ‘logical’ sense of the truth is based on its ‘ontological’ sense (L. Figueiredo, *La filosofía narrativa de Alasdair MacIntyre*, Pamplona 1999, pp. 96–98).

<sup>109</sup> A. MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*..., pp. 360–361.

<sup>110</sup> Idem, *Aquinas’s Critique of Education*..., p. 104; *Moral Pluralism Without Moral Relativism*..., pp. 5–6.

<sup>111</sup> B. Román, *La propuesta comunitarista de A. MacIntyre*..., pp. 74–75; P. Kelly, *MacIntyre’s Critique of Utilitarianism*..., p. 137; Fco J. De La Torre, *El modelo de diálogo intercultural de A. MacIntyre*..., p. 97; C. Corral, *Acción, identidad y tradición: el argumento narrativo*..., pp. 123, 141; J. Stout, *Virtue among the ruins: An Essay on MacIntyre*, “Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionphilosophie” 1984, Vol. 26, No. 3, pp. 256–273; G. Graham, *MacIntyre’s Fusion of History and Philosophy*, [in:] *After MacIntyre*..., p. 174.

with his works and also with his current intellectual stage. ‘Human nature’ is common to all human beings but, at the same time and because of it, it is embodied in every individual. The opposition between ‘universalism’ and ‘particularism’ can be solved in this way. As stated above, human rationality can reach universal principles, but only through particular/traditional means.

Crosti thinks that this way is the proper Aristotelian way, which he calls “universalism at the end” (‘universalismo di arrivo’), in opposition to “universalism at the beginning” (‘universalismo di partenza’). For this reason, we think that the anthropology of flourishing is based on what we call a ‘traditionalist universalism’. Thus moral values would not depend (totally) on individual autonomy – as we see from the individualistic point of view – but they would depend on human nature, community and tradition.

## Conclusion

Here we must recall the questions to be answered in order to relate them to the concepts that we have dealt with so far. The questions were: 1) Which are the concepts on which MacIntyre bases his alternative to individualism? 2) Does this alternative overcome individualism? The answers to both are related to each other.

We have seen that the concepts that we can take from MacIntyre’s thought are three: ‘narrative person’, ‘community’ and ‘tradition’ (‘narrative rationality’). In dealing with the first one, we have developed the ‘anthropology of flourishing’. We have seen that the final end for a human being is its flourishing, which is based on independence in practical reasoning. However such independence is not the same as in the individualistic point of view.

MacIntyrean independence is a ‘dependent’ independence, and it is like this in its basis, its development and in its end. It is a ‘dependent’ independence in its basis because ‘human nature’ provides the individual with some powers/faculties and inclinations that do not depend on his autonomy. It is a ‘dependent’ independence in its end (‘telos’) because its end is not itself but the good (the realization of the good). And, finally, it is a ‘dependent’ independence in its development because it would not be possible without virtues, without taking into account human vulnerability (and dependency) and, consequently, without community. The individualistic concept of independence (and freedom), therefore, is not enough to explain the whole human development.

The second feature of ‘Individualism’ is that moral and political values depend only on individual autonomy. We have seen that human flourishing – individual flourishing – is ruled by laws related to the biological and moral individual’s development. There are rules for practices and there are also rules for flourishing, which are the rules of natural law. At the same time, moral debate and practices can take place only in a communitarian and traditional context. Because of all these



reasons, individual autonomy cannot be the (only) basis from which to define moral principles.

Society would not be, therefore, an association of independent individuals united because of utilitarian relationships – as Individualism states. To talk about ‘individual flourishing’ and ‘communitarian flourishing’ implies that human flourishing is naturally an ‘interpersonal’ process: ‘my’ flourishing is ‘our’ flourishing. The sense or ‘telos’ of civil laws is that flourishing.

We can conclude, therefore, by saying that the MacIntyrean anthropology of flourishing offers a serious alternative to Individualism because, finally, it can offer a more coherent and true explanation of what human beings and community are.<sup>112</sup> In order to do this, MacIntyre does not start from theories but rather from specific and particular facts: human actions in specific practices and communities. He starts from them and, since “action follows being” (“*operatio sequitur esse*”), he then accesses the being.

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<sup>112</sup> There are, of course, some gaps in MacIntyrean thought and, consequently, there are concepts that can be improved in order to make that thought more coherent: ‘human nature’, ‘community’, ‘psyche’, etc.