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MacIntyre's Virtue Ethics as a Historicist Interpretation of Rational Moral Tradition

Abstract: Alasdair MacIntyre, who does not see tradition as a dead concept but evaluates it as an argument that has expanded historically and socially embodied in terms of methodology, asserts that the rational virtue tradition created by Aristotle, a figure that unites the predecessor and the successor of a very ancient tradition should be revived in order to overcome the moral and socio-political problems of the contemporary world. According to MacIntyre, the consistent and rational basis that moral philosophy has lost due to liberal individualism in a period of about three centuries can be restored by the Aristotelian tradition. This study deals with MacIntyre's analyses of the problems of modern moral philosophy which focus on the view that the tradition in question has an understanding of the teleological human nature and the essence that determines the real purpose of man.
Keywords: MacIntyre, Aristotelianism, Virtue Ethics, Community, Tradition.

Rasyonel Ahlak Geleneğinin Tarihselci Bir Yorumu Olarak MacIntyre'ın Erdem Etiği

Öz: Alasdair MacIntyre, who does not see tradition as a dead concept but evaluates it as an argument that has expanded historically and socially embodied in terms of methodology, asserts that the rational virtue tradition created by Aristotle, a figure that unites the predecessor and the successor of a very ancient tradition should be revived in order to overcome the moral and socio-political problems of the contemporary world. According to MacIntyre, the consistent and rational basis that moral philosophy has lost due to liberal individualism in a period of about three centuries can be restored by the Aristotelian tradition. This study deals with MacIntyre's analyses of the problems of modern moral philosophy which focus on the view that the tradition in question has an understanding of the teleological human nature and the essence that determines the real purpose of man.
Anahtar Kelimeler: MacIntyre, Aristotelesçilik, Erdem Etiği, Topluluk, Gelenek.

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Introduction

Believing that principles and practices arise from a certain context and that this context is an ancient tradition of virtue, against modern moral conceptions that do not accept the existence of impersonal standards that constitute the common good and that evaluate morality in a way that is dependent on the autonomous agent, Alasdair MacIntyre replaces the destructive and reconciliatory attitude of modernity with a historicist interpretation of the rational moral tradition initiated by Aristotle. According to MacIntyre, the reason for the confusion in the field of morality in the contemporary world is that moral concepts are detached from their contexts that give them a certain meaning and importance, and as a result, disjointed parts of a certain conceptual framework significantly hinder theoretical and practical understanding at the moral level. But stating that the regularity of moral language has left its place to confusion due to the transformation of moral concepts in recent centuries, MacIntyre argues that the perspective of the tradition created by Aristotle is needed in order to understand the emergence of modern morality and its dilemmas/conflicts.

MacIntyre, known as a Neo-Aristotelian[1], revises Aristotle's view of virtue, which lacks a historicist view, and deals with morality by focusing on its historical and socio-cultural connections. For this reason, MacIntyre, who thinks that societies reveal different understandings of virtue within the framework of the conditions they are in, not only deals with the difficulties that arise in these schemes but also develops a critical approach to modern moral conflicts and antagonisms while following the various forms of Aristotle's schema of virtues. In

[1] Communitarians such as Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer, including MacIntyre, who complained about the collapse of moral and political communities in contemporary societies, have been called "Neo-Aristotelian". Apart from this unclear usage, the term "Neo-Aristotelianism" is used to express two more argumentations. "Neo-Aristotelianism", which is identified with a neo-conservative social diagnosis, especially regarding the problems of late-capitalist societies, also describes hermeneutic philosophical ethics that accepts the Aristotelian *phronesis* concept as its starting point (Benhabib 2007: 25).

this context, MacIntyre creates virtue ethics within the framework of an understanding that is parallel to the human understanding of the classics, against modern theories that reject the concept of a human that is thought to have a basic nature, purpose or "function" and deny the founding role of the community.

1. Aristotelianism as a Virtue Tradition

MacIntyre, who does not consider Aristotle as the sole figure in a search for a moral basis but claims it to be a particular school of thought, argues that Aristotelian thought can be brought back to the present day with various revisions by considering the tradition which he does not believe to be obsolete, as an argument that has expanded historically and become socially embodied. MacIntyre attempts to develop an understanding of virtue by excluding Aristotle's understanding of virtues in the context of metaphysics and presupposing "metaphysical biology"[2]. According to MacIntyre, “the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments” (MacIntyre 2007: 259).

In the book of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre challenges Nietzsche's genealogy and identifies the material to be used in developing a new understanding of the virtues while describing the history of changing conceptions of virtues in the literary, sociological and philosophical texts of contemporary society, starting from the myths and epics of the archaic society before philosophy (Zelyüt 2001: XVI). In this context, MacIntyre draws attention to the role played in the past in shaping of moral culture by building a bridge between heroic literature and the contemporary world, and he thinks that Aristotle is in an activity of understanding, discovering,

[2] According to Bernstein, Aristotle's ethics and politics are intricately intertwined with his metaphysics, cosmology, psychology, and biology. It is quite difficult to translate this metaphysical thought into the present; For this reason, these initiatives are works that reveal the truth of classical texts through interpretation, not justification (Bernstein 1983: 188-189).

and producing in the light of various[3] narratives such as stories, epics and poems that embody the worlds of thought of older societies. "Nonetheless it is Aristotle whose account of the virtues decisively constitutes the classical tradition as a tradition of moral thought, firmly establishing a good deal that his poetic predecessors had only been able to assert or suggest and making the classical tradition a rational tradition, without surrendering to Plato's pessimism about the social world" (MacIntyre 2007: 147).

MacIntyre, who argues that the above-mentioned design of moral thought is also related to social conditions, observes Aristotle himself is not a figure who created an understanding of virtue; but someone who sheds light on to an understanding that is implicit in the action, discourse and thought of an educated Athenian and expresses it openly. According to Aristotle, who seeks to be the rational voice of the best citizens of the best city-state, the city-state is the only political structure in which virtues can be truly and fully realized. Therefore, a philosophical theory of virtues has a necessarily sociological or – as Aristotle put it – political[4] point of view (MacIntyre 2007: 147-148; Aristotle 1915: 1181a).

Aristotle, who sees ethics as the starting point of politics, has tasked himself with bringing an explanation for the "good", which is localized in the police[5] and determined in part by the distinctive features of the police, but it is also cosmic and

[3] According to MacIntyre, works such as stories and fairy tales, which are educational/transmission tools of certain moral thoughts and actions, form the historical memories of societies and provide explanations for the moral background of the ongoing contemporary debates about classical societies. Therefore, it is imperative to understand heroic literature in order to understand classical society and its successors, whether it actually existed or not (MacIntyre 2007: 121).

[4] Aristotle, who does not use the concept of "politikos" only in the sense of the political, thinks that this concept encompasses both the political and the social (MacIntyre 1998: 38). However, David Ross expresses the relationship between politics and ethics in Aristotle as follows: "The supreme practical science—that to which all others are subordinate and ministerial—is politics, or, as we, with our fuller consciousness of man's membership of communities other than the state, might be more inclined to call it, social science. Of this science ethics is but a part, and accordingly Aristotle never speaks of 'ethics' as a separate science, but only of 'the study of character' or 'our discussions of character'" (Ross 1995: 197).

[5] In the small-scale Greek city-state, the police are institutions where both the administration and its executive apparatus are determined, and the face-to-face relations of social life find their home (MacIntyre 1998: 67).

universal. According to Aristotle, who claims that the subject of ethics is 'good', every human activity, research, and practice aims at some good because what is meant by 'good' is what human beings characteristically aim for (Aristotle 2009: 1094a). Human beings, like all other species, have a nature of their own, and that is a nature in which they move towards a special telos. Accordingly, good is defined according to their distinctive features (MacIntyre 2007: 148).

Aristotelian ethics, which dominated medieval Europe for long periods with different forms it took in the historical process, is based on a teleological scheme that includes a radical opposition between the existing human being and the human that can become when he realizes his true nature. Ethics, a discipline that allows people to understand how to move from the first stage to the second stage, presupposes a certain understanding of potential and action, a certain understanding of the essence of human as a rational animal, and a certain human telos. Orders that recommend various virtues and forbid their corresponding frailties teach how to move from the state of potentiality to the state of act, how to realize the true nature of human, and how to reach his original purpose. While desires and emotions are regulated by the use of such orders, the mind teaches both what the real purpose is and how to achieve it (Aristotle 2009: 1098a-1098b). Thus, it becomes a three-element schema that contains human nature (human nature in its own ignorance) that initially does not agree with and contradicts the orders of ethics, and that must be transformed into the human nature, which can be possible if it becomes conscious of its own telos through the practical reason and the training of experience (MacIntyre 2007: 52-53).

The schema above is not changed in essence although it becomes more complex as it is placed within a framework of religious belief in later periods by Aquinas in Christianity, Maimonides in Judaism, and Averroes in Islam. Ethical orders start to be understood not only as purposive orders but also as manifestations of a divine law. The list of virtues and frailties is rearranged, some

additions are made, and the concept of sin is added to Aristotle's concept of mistake. However, the aforementioned three-element schema maintains its central place in the religious understanding of evaluative thought and judgment. Thus, the attainment of man's original goal can no longer be fully realized in this world, but only in the afterlife (MacIntyre 2007: 53).

According to MacIntyre, this tradition never limited itself to Aristotle, although it used *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* as the main texts whenever it could. Because it is this tradition that has always created itself in a dialogic relationship without entering into any simple approval relationship with Aristotle (MacIntyre 2007: 165). Therefore, Aristotelian virtue ethics, which should not be limited to Aristotle's thoughts, is an effort to bring together previous studies and a source that activates subsequent thoughts.[6]

2. The Dissolution of Aristotelianism and Emotive Ethics

In the Middle Ages, when the religious form of classical morality dominated, the moral discourse had a double meaning: to tell a person what to do and to say what the law decreed by God and grasped by reason. Many medieval proponents of this idea believed that the moral schema was a part of God's self-disclosure, but that it was also an exploration of the mind. However, this area of consensus began to crumble with the appearance of Protestantism and the first predecessors of the Jansenist Catholic understanding at the end of the Middle Ages.[7] They embodied a new understanding, arguing that reason cannot provide any fundamental understanding of man's true goal. In this context, Jansenist Pascal, who realized that the concept of mind, which was a mixture of Protestantism and Jansenism, and the concept of reason used by the science and philosophy of XVII. century, were

[6] According to MacIntyre, when the modern world comes to the point of systematically rejecting the traditional structure and the classical view of human nature, the realization that it is Aristotelianism that must be defeated supports this approach.

[7] For the destruction of the meaningful order of the universe, which is full of religious and moral meaning, see. West 1997: 11-13.

largely similar, represented an important stage of this historical process. In this new understanding, it has been argued that the mind, which cannot grasp essences or the transition from potential state to action, is only computational, that is, it can evaluate factual truths with mathematical relation, but its power is limited because it cannot do more. Therefore, this anti-Aristotelian understanding argued that reason can only speak of means in the field of practice, and that it should be silent when it comes to aims. After Pascal, Hume and Kant, who accepted the negative features of this concept of mind as they were, thought that reason could not comprehend any teleological features or any essential structure in the objective universe that could be the subject of natural sciences (MacIntyre 2007: 54-55).

Accordingly, the combined effect of secular opposition to Christian theology and the scientific and philosophical rejection of Aristotelianism led to the exclusion of the notion of a human being to appear when each species becomes conscious of its own telos. However, in both Greek and Medieval versions of the Aristotelian tradition, moral orders and arguments were based on a concept of a *human being* considered to have an essential nature, purpose, or "function." Accordingly, "human" meant "good person" and this approach was taken as the starting point of ethics. In other words, according to the classical tradition, to be human meant to fulfill a set of roles, each of which has its own meaning and purpose, that is, to be a family member, a citizen, a soldier, a philosopher, or a religious official (MacIntyre 2007: 58-59). However, the fundamental rejection of the classical tradition in its entirety meant the abandonment of the traditional meaning of "human", who was thought of as an individual separate from and prior to all these roles and purposes.

Thus, modern thought, rejecting the classical notion of human, tried to replace what they thought as traditional forms of morality with a kind of worldly morality and had to find a new status for it. But, according to MacIntyre, these attempts by Hume, A. Smith, Diderot, Kant, and their contemporaries did not go beyond contributing to a series of unresolved debates (Zelyüt 2001: XV). The

problem was further deepened when Kierkegaard introduced a type of choice in *Enten-Eller (either-or)* that cannot be rationally justified at all. In this context, moral problems have been rendered insoluble by evaluating moral judgments as a tool of individual will or as expressions of emotion. According to MacIntyre, who sees the cause of the aforementioned deadlock as emotivism, this theory "is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character" (MacIntyre 2007: 12).

Although emotive elements started to be seen in Hume's moral theory in the 18th century, emotivism, of which G. E Moore was the founding father, emerged as a theory on its own in the twentieth century in England. In general, three elements come to the fore in Moore's emotive moral theory in his *Principia Ethica*. (i) Propositions that state that something is "good" are intuitions. These propositions are not open to confirmatory or falsifying demonstration; no positive or negative evidence can be given about them. (ii) To call an action "true" is to say that it is an action that produces the "best" among possible alternative actions as a factual situation. (iii) Personal affections and aesthetic tastes include all the highest good, and this is considered the most fundamental truth of moral philosophy (MacIntyre 2007: 14-15). From this point of view, emotivism, which basically argues that there are no objective and impersonal moral standards, is based on the argument that every attempt to rationally ground an objective morality actually fails (MacIntyre 2007: 19).

Although it claims to be universal, emotivism, which is a theory that has emerged and developed in very unique historical conditions, is connected with a special stage of moral development or regression. Likewise, the emotive self or the modern self is the end product of a long and complex set of developments (MacIntyre 2007: 87). In the emotive self, which does not encounter any limitations on the ground on which it will stand while making a judgment,

everything is evaluated from any point of view that the individual has adopted. As a matter of fact, according to modern moral philosophers, being a moral agent[8] depends on refraining from all the features that a person may have in all situations, and being able to make judgments about them from a completely universal and abstract point of view, detached from the particular features of the society. Therefore, anyone can be a moral agent because it is the self itself, not social roles and practices, where moral activity should be placed (MacIntyre 2007: 31-32).

With no necessary social content and identity, this democratized self can be anything, adopt any role, or adhere to any point of view. "But from this it follows that the emotivist self can have no rational history in its transitions from one state of moral commitment to another. Inner conflicts are for it necessarily *au fond* the confrontation of one contingent arbitrariness by another. It is a self with no given continuities, save those of the body which is its bearer and of the memory which to the best of its ability gathers in its past" (MacIntyre 2007: 33).

According to MacIntyre, such a conception of personality, completely detached from social formation and having no rational history of its own, has an abstract character. As a matter of fact, the emotive individual, while establishing dominance in his own field, has lost the traditional framework of social identity and the understanding of human life directed towards a specific purpose[9] (MacIntyre 2007: 33-34).

3. MacIntyre and His Multilayered View of Virtue

According to MacIntyre, since Aristotelian teleology was banished from the moral world after the sixteenth century, the primary question for moderns has

[8] According to the modern individualist view, the moral agent is defined as an independent person with the capacity to make choices, change their choices, and form commitments with any community through rational reflection (Christman 2002: 7).

[9] Sandel, who thinks alike with MacIntyre in this regard, defines the subject, who can break away from his given goals as he wishes and is able to stay out of the community, as the "non-liable self" (Sandel 1984: 87).

been about moral codes and principles; whereas research, in order to understand the function and authority of moral codes, must begin from the virtues as Aristotle did (Zelyüt 2001: XVI). In this respect, MacIntyre, who utilized Aristotle's explanation of virtue and reckoned with the weaknesses of this thought, attempted to reconstruct Aristotelianism by taking into account historicity.

Since every moral understanding presupposes certain sociology,[10] MacIntyre, who thinks that even within the same tradition of thought there can be different and incompatible ideas of virtue, argues in his *After Virtue* that a unifying, core concept of virtue[11] can be discovered by analyzing the different ideas of virtue by Homer, Sophocles, Aristotle, the New Testament, and medieval thinkers, and this discovery can be revealed together with the conceptual integrity of the tradition mentioned. Three notions play a role in the logical development of this complex, historical and multi-layered concept: practice, narrative unity, and tradition. The explanation of these three notions constitutes the three stages of the core concept in question, the next of which includes the previous one (Zelyüt 2001: XVI).

What MacIntyre meant in the first place by the concept of practice is "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" (MacIntyre 2007: 187)." MacIntyre, who gives playing football rather than hitting

[10] Every moral philosophy explicitly or implicitly offers a partial conceptual analysis of the moral subject's relationship to his reasoning, motives, intentions, and actions, and in doing so often presupposes the claim that these concepts are embodied in social life (Knight 1998: 73).

[11] In general terms, in Homeric poems, a virtue is a quality that enables a person to fully fulfill the requirements of his well-defined social role. In Aristotle's understanding, although some virtues can only be attained by certain types of people, in general virtues are nevertheless attributed to people simply because they are human, not because of the social roles they occupy. Although the New Testament's understanding of virtue is different in content from the Aristotelian understanding, it is the same as Aristotle's in terms of logical and conceptual structure. A virtue is a quality that, if practiced, leads to human telos, as in Aristotle (MacIntyre 2007: 184-185).

the ball skillfully, architecture rather than building walls as examples for this kind of practice, also considers the creation and continuity of human communities within the classical tradition as a practice. In order to understand the concept of practice, which expresses and develops human capacities by pointing to sociality, it is necessary to explain the good that is internal to practice, the standard of superiority suitable for practice, and their relationship with virtues.

According to MacIntyre, who states that an activity devoid of inner good will not have the feature of being practical, while the good that is internal to practice can only be determined and defined by the experience of taking part in that practice; external goods are those that can be obtained through other practices (MacIntyre 2007: 188). Therefore, the person who is far from or deprived of the relevant practice cannot have knowledge and experience about the internal good. Participating in practice requires adhering to standards and rules of superiority as well as attaining the good. Because it is not possible to participate in practice without accepting the authority of changeable standards that have been formed up to that point in the specified field (Zelyüt 1997: 158). The external good, which has an individual character, is the characteristic object of competition in which there should be losers as well as winners. The internal good, on the other hand, is the product of the struggle for superiority, and its achievement is only possible if it is good for the general community of all individuals participating in the practice (MacIntyre 2007: 190).

Drawing on the good internal to practice, MacIntyre gives an initial definition of the notion of virtue, which will be developed later: "A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the Jack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods" (MacIntyre 2007: 191). Thus, according to MacIntyre, who defines the virtues without which practices cannot be sustained as courage, honesty, and justice, the fact that societies historically

embody their own understanding of courage, honesty, and justice does not change this fact (MacIntyre 2007: 191). This is because virtues, which are the kind of good that we determine our relations with other people with whom we share the standards and purposes that shape the practice by referring to them, have a historical dimension.

To participate in practice now is to enter into a certain relationship not only with the contemporary practitioners of that practice but also with those who have taken part in it before, especially with those whose achievements have brought the event to where it is today. However, practices that have a tradition and a history of their own do not have a single goal or goals that are fixed for all time because goals change within the respective activity's own history (MacIntyre 2007: 193-194).

On the other hand, according to MacIntyre, practices and institutions should not be confused with each other; chess, physics and medicine etc. are one of the practices; chess club, research centers, universities and hospitals are institutions. Institutions that are characteristically and necessarily related to external goods are places where money and other material goods are acquired. They are formed according to power and status, and in return, they distribute money, power, and position as rewards (MacIntyre 2007: 194). Institutions, however, are carriers of practices; no practice can last long unless supported by institutions. The ideals and creativity of practice are easily undermined by the institution's pursuit of profit. Therefore, without the virtues of justice, courage, and honesty, practices cannot resist the corrupting power of institutions (Zelyüt 1997: 159-160). Although institutions have destructive power, the creation and survival of human community forms, and therefore institutions, is possible with the implementation of a practice.

The second step in explaining MacIntyre's notion of virtue is the narrative unity of human life. In his own words; "unless there is a telos which transcends the limited goods of practices by constituting the good of a whole human life, the good

of a human life conceived as a unity, it will both be the case that a certain subversive arbitrariness will invade the moral life and that we shall be unable to specify the context of certain virtues adequately. These two considerations are reinforced by a third: that there is at least one virtue recognized by the tradition which cannot be specified at all except with reference to the wholeness of a human life-the virtue of integrity or constancy. […] This Notion of singleness of purpose in a whole life can have no application unless that of a whole life does" (MacIntyre 2007: 203).

According to MacIntyre, every contemporary attempt to design human life as a whole and to present virtues with an adequate telos encounters two different kinds of obstacles, social and philosophical. Social barriers arise from modernity's division of human life into a number of segments, each with its own behavioral norms and styles. With this fragmentation of human life, working life has been separated from resting, private space has been separated from public space, things in common have been separated from what is personal, childhood has been separated from the old age period and each turned into a separate space. All of these resolutions have been carried out in a way that creates not the integrity but the eccentricity of each individual's life, who passes through each of these phases by thinking and feeling as he is taught. Philosophical obstacles other than social ones are caused by two different tendencies; one is the tendency that is predominantly, if not exclusively, tamed in analytical philosophy, and the other is the tendency that finds itself at home in both sociological theory and existentialism. The first is the tendency to think of the human act as atomistic and to analyze complex acts and interpersonal relations in terms of their basic components. The other is the tendency to separate the individual and the roles he plays or the roles in individual life, as in both Sartre's existentialism and Ralf Dahrendorf's sociology (MacIntyre 2007: 204).

In this direction, according to MacIntyre, since the nihilistic tendencies of modernity [12], which destroyed the idea of the unity of human life, contain a threat to the self along with morality, the solution to the moral problems of modernity should also explain how the concept of personal identity can be saved from the corrosive effects of modern life. For this reason, according to MacIntyre, who refers to a narrative notion, just as an action is made meaningful by placing it in a story, a life can be made meaningful by finding its narrative structure that gives it its meaning or importance in the story. Based on this notion, self-identity, which is a project, can be given meaning by providing a narrative unity and what is good can be discovered (Poole 1996: 127-128).

MacIntyre argues that human actions can be identified and understood by placing them in the context of a series of narrative history and says that human, as a story-telling animal in his practices and actions, is a narrator of stories desiring the truth within his own history. In this context, every person is a part of other people's stories; any single life story is an element of a nested set of stories (MacIntyre 2007: 218-219). The purpose of a person, which includes what he should do, is also related to the story or stories he accepts himself as a part of. A person who participates in society with the characters and roles attributed to him has to learn what these are in order to understand how to interpret both the reactions he receives from others and the reactions he gives to them (MacIntyre 2007: 216). Thus, the narrative self-concept means, on the one hand, to be as perceived by others in one's life from birth to death, and on the other hand, to be the subject of a history with a unique meaning that belongs only to itself and not to anyone else. To be the subject of a narrative is to be held responsible for the acts and experiences that make up a narrative life. In this respect, the person who makes his life meaningful is the person who takes responsibility for his actions and turns towards the telos, or an ultimate goal (MacIntyre 2007: 217-218).

[12] According to MacIntyre, modern individualist thought, which includes the rejection of all ideas of the common good, is the source of nihilism (Mouffe, 1993: 29).

For MacIntyre, it is the unity of the story embodied in an individual life that gives one's life unity and meaning. Accordingly, what is good for the individual goes through questioning how to define and experience this unity in the best way, that is, the quest that creates moral life with its unity. "The unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest. Quests sometimes fail, are frustrated, abandoned or dissipated into distractions; and human lives may in all these ways also fail. But the only criteria for success or failure in a human life as a whole are the criteria of success or failure in a narrated or to-be-narrated quest (MacIntyre 2007: 219)," so what does the quest mean?

Concerning the key concept of the 'quest', MacIntyre appeals to two important features of medieval design of it; the first of these is the idea that without a partially determined final telos design, no quest can be made. From where can this design, which requires to be humane, be formed? Such a design can be drawn from questions that will push one to strive to transcend the limited idea of virtue available through and within practices. In other words, it emerges in the search for a kind of good design that will make it possible to rank the other good according to itself, that will allow expanding the understanding of the content and purpose of the virtues, and that will make it possible to grasp the place and importance of unity and stability (perseverance) in the kind of life that is initially defined in terms of a quest for a good. The second feature is related to the nature of the quest because the medieval design of the quest is not similar to a search for something that has been fully characterized before, such as a miner's search for gold or a geologist's search for oil. The goal of the quest is finally understood in full in the course of the quest itself and is only possible in encountering and coping with the various evils, dangers, temptations, and destructions that create any quests with its phases and events. The quest is always an education about both the character of the thing sought and the self-knowledge (MacIntyre 2007: 218-219).

Thus MacIntyre gives the second-stage definition of the notion of virtue: "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 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. The catalogue of the virtues will therefore include the virtues required to sustain the kind of households and the kind of political communities in which men and women can seek for the good together and the virtues necessary for philosophical enquiry about the character of the good. We have then arrived at a provisional conclusion about the good life for man: the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is" (MacIntyre 2007: 219). MacIntyre, who shows not only the connections of virtues with practices, but also their connection with a good life for man, defines the third stage in virtue explanation by referring to the notion of tradition.

The moral life, which is characterized by the quest for the good life, is not basically a life in which the individual alone is evaluated. This is partly because the design of the good life embodied in human life and the so-called good life change based on the circumstances. The good life for a fifth-century Athenian general is not the same for a medieval nun or a seventeenth-century farmer. This situation includes not only that different individuals live in different social environments, but also that people are carriers of a certain social identity. As MacIntyre states; "I am someone's son or daughter, someone else's cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this clan, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles. As such, I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations.

These constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity" (MacIntyre 2007: 220).

According to modern individualism, which largely contradicts these ideas, the person who can easily bracket the mentioned roles is determined by his/her choices. However, according to the narrative individual understanding, an important part of the person's social roles and relationships are considered given for the purposes of personal evaluation (Kymlicka 2002: 221). In this respect, the life story of a person is always hidden in the story of the communities in which he finds his identity. A person comes into the world with a certain past; trying to cut ties with this past means damaging one's current relationships. In this respect, having a historical identity and having a social identity are always intertwined. However, despite everything, it should not be forgotten that rebellion against one's identity is always one of the possible forms of expressing one's identity (MacIntyre 2007: 221).

In addition to what is stated above, the more the communities such as family, neighbors, city and tribe, in which a person finds his/her identity through membership, unite their members within their own borders, the more they separate themselves from the members of other communities and individualize themselves (Bauman 2016: 62). According to MacIntyre, without these moral particularities, the individual would not have a starting point because the idea of escaping from these particularities and taking refuge in the realm of universal principles unique to humans is nothing but an illusion (MacIntyre 2007: 221). MacIntyre, then does not accept that lifestyles or moral and political realities can be evaluated from a position of autonomy without participating in any way in a particular way of life, culture, or tradition (Sperger 2003: 40).

In this respect, who or what a person is depends to a large extent on what he or she has inherited, namely, on the private past that now survives to some extent in him. MacIntyre explains; "I find myself part of a history and that is generally to

say, whether I like it or not, whether I recognize it or not, one of the bearers of a tradition" (MacIntyre 2007: 221). Thus, the individual's pursuit of his or her own good takes place in a context that is characteristically determined by the traditions which the individual's life is a part of and which is valid for both the good that is internal to practice and the good that is embodied in a single life. In this way, MacIntyre refers to another point where the phenomenon of being embedded in the narrative sense comes from: "the history of a practice in our time is generally and characteristically embedded in and made intelligible in terms of the larger and longer history of the tradition through which the practice in its present form was conveyed to us; the history of each of our own lives is generally and characteristically embedded in and made intelligible in terms of the larger and longer histories of a number of traditions. I have to say 'generally and characteristically' rather than 'always', for traditions decay, disintegrate and disappear. What then sustains and strengthens traditions? What weakens and destroys them?"[13]

In this case, keeping the traditions alive depends on whether the relevant virtues are implemented or not. "The virtues find their point and purpose not only in sustaining those relationships necessary if the variety of goods internal to practices are to be achieved and not only in sustaining the form of an individual life in which that individual may seek out his or her good as the good of his or her whole life, but also in sustaining those traditions which provide both practices and individual lives with their necessary historical context" (MacIntyre 2007: 223). The absence of the virtues of justice, honesty, courage, and intellectual virtues such as *phronesis* and *sophia* leads to the destruction of tradition. Recognizing this fact is also recognizing the existence of an additional virtue; the virtue of having a competent understanding of the tradition to which a person adheres or which

[13] According to MacIntyre, tradition does not only cover the narrative of an argument; rather, it may be in conflict with other controversial retellings. This is why tradition is always in danger of falling into inconsistency (MacIntyre 1977: 461).

surrounds him. According to MacIntyre, who argues that an adequate sense of tradition manifests itself in capturing future possibilities that the past makes possible for the present, living traditions have a definite and determinable character because they perpetuate an unfinished story; as long as they have this kind of character, they face a future that draws from the past (MacIntyre 2007: 222-223).

In general, MacIntyre tries to base particularity on to being a member of the tradition arguing that there is no practical reasoning that is ahistorical and with which everyone agrees; that the self has no ahistorical essence; and that it is impossible to say what is good for human in a universal way from a standpoint outside of a tradition (Zelyüt 1997: 172).

Conclusion

Believing that contemporary societies have inherited only fragments from the past that represent some moral beliefs, and considering modern moral theories as vague efforts to unite these disjointed fragments, MacIntyre claims Aristotelian tradition can guide modern societies in restoring moral attitudes and obligations to their former integrity. According to Aristotle, morality is primarily related to the "good", localized in the police and partly determined by the distinctive features of the police, but it is also universal. In this context, Aristotle, who acts from the socio-cultural structure he is in and describes himself as a person who tries to be the rational voice of the best citizens of the best city-state, relates that the police is the environment where virtues will be implemented and defined. In line with these thoughts, MacIntyre accepts the key role of the community in moral life and does not see the community as an arena where each individual pursues the design of the good life, which is his/her choice, as advocated by liberal individualism. For him, the community, with its moral particularity, is a starting point for its members. The idea of escaping from these particularities and taking refuge in the realm of universal principles unique to human beings is an illusion.

In this way, according to MacIntyre, since the nihilistic tendencies of modernity, which detach people from their social dependencies and destroy the idea of the unity of human life, contain a threat to the self along with morality, the solution to the moral problems of modernity should also explain how the concept of personal identity can be saved from the corrosive effects of modern life. MacIntyre's understanding of virtue with a purpose as such has a multi-layered and historical structure. In this context, the first definition of the concept of virtue, in which three notions, such as practice, narrative unity and tradition play a role, a virtue is a quality whose possession and practice help to achieve the good internal to the practice, but its absence prevents achieving the good. According to the definition in the second stage, virtue is the tendencies that will enable one to overcome evil, danger, temptation and destructions, and it supports us in the process of seeking the good, and equips us with an ever-increasing self-knowledge and the knowledge of the good. In accordance with the third stage, virtues have the function of ensuring the continuity of traditions that create both practices and individual lives with their necessary historical contexts.

For this reason, according to MacIntyre, who refers to a narrative notion in virtue ethics, just as an action is made meaningful by placing it in a story, a life can be made meaningful by finding its narrative structure that gives it its meaning or importance in the story. In this context, the human being, who is thought of as a story-telling animal in his practices and actions, is a narrator of stories desiring the truth in his own history. Within the scope of this notion, self-identity, which is a project, is given meaning by providing a narrative unity, and this is the same as the discovery of the good. The moral life, which is characterized by the quest for the good life, is not basically a life in which the individual is evaluated alone. Since human is born into a world with a certain past, he has both a social and historical identity. In this respect, one's quest for the good life is hidden in the stories of the communities in which he finds his identity.

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