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HUMAN GOOD, VIRTUES AND PRACTICE: MACINTYRE'S ACCOUNT OF A THOMISTIC-ARISTOTELIAN PRACTICAL RATIONALITY[1]

Introduction

Arguing that we could not possibly come up with a neutral moral standard to guide our actions, that is, that our practical decisions and actions are largely influenced by our adherence to a particular tradition, and that our moral choices are always a product of our upbringing that has oriented us towards a particular understanding of the good, MacIntyre has taken upon himself the task of articulating a particular tradition's understanding of the good with the hope of showing the superiority of its narrative over its rivals. Initially, MacIntyre believed that Marxism provides the answer for this concern. Hence, early in his career as a thinker and as an advocate of social actions, he had joined several Marxist groups and endeavored to articulate the Marxist account of the human good. Eventually however, he had abandoned his early Marxist aspirations and has come to embrace what he refers to as the Thomistic-Aristotelian account of the human good[2]. MacIntyre is clear and direct in his claim about his allegiance to this tradition. He has come to regard himself as a Thomist, particularly, the Aquinas that has become a commentator of Aristotelian philosophy and the Aquinas that has started an ethical tradition that has been contrasted to utilitari-

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[2] For an account on MacIntyre's engagement and later disengagement with Marxism, please see (Blackledge and Robinson 2008, particularly the "Introduction", xiii-xlx).

anism, Kantianism and liberalism (See MacIntyre 1988, x; MacIntyre 1999, xi.).

What has drawn MacIntyre to the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition is that which he refers to as the superior account of practical rationality which in one of his most recent and perceptive works, *Dependent Rational Animal*, he identifies as Aquinas' intimation on the parts "played in human life by vulnerability to physical dangers and mental dangers and harms" (MacIntyre 1999, xi). He believes that ethical theories are not to be, and should not be, viewed apart from an ethical practice, and so he believes that moral reflection must both inform and be informed by human practices. Practical reason is described by the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP) as the "general human capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what one ought to do" (Wallace 2014). Furthermore, SEP adds that practical reason is practical by virtue of its subject matter because it is concerned with 'actions' and it is practical by virtue of its consequence because 'it moves people to act.' Within this understanding of the person's practical reason, MacIntyre would argue that moral theories must inform and guide a person's concrete moral decisions and actions. In MacIntyre's view, the Thomistic-Aristotelian account of practical rationality is ready to lend a hand with this task.

The commitment to the 'human good' as an end

Central to MacIntyre's allegiance to the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition is the commitment to the understanding of the 'human good' as that which becomes the 'end' proper to the nature of the human person. Aristotle argues that 'all things tend, by natural desire, to the good' (See Aquinas 1993, 11)[3]. Moreover, despite the multiplicity of human ends, one's multiple ends are subordinated to man's understanding of his ultimate end (see Flannery 2013, 81-84). But, the recognition of such end or good provide us only the *archê*, the beginning of a life-work (see Barachi 2012)[4], which can only be achieved in a suc-

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[3] Aquinas reiterates this point in his *Summa Theologiae* where he insisted that 'the good has a nature of an end,' and 'man has a natural inclination to those things that are viewed by reason as good.' This has constituted what Aquinas would call as the first precept of natural law: 'do good and avoid evil' (see ST I-II, 94, 2), also see Neves and Mele (2013) who argue that Aquinas provided a useful instruction on how the perception of the good as an end may become useful in the modern-day attempt to manage cultural pluralism that has become an undeniable facet of contemporary common life. Henceforth, Aquinas' *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* shall be referred to as *CNE* and the numbers will refer to the numbering used in Aquinas' commentary. Moreover, references to Aristotle's text on *Nicomachean Ethics* will also be taken from this translation. *NE* shall be used as convention to refer to Aristotle's text.

[4] Barachi here emphasizes that Aristotle's teleology is far from being determinist. The talk of the human *telos* is not ignorant of the fact that the human person remains to be responsible and accountable to create and decide the kind of life that s/he wants to have. For an account on Aquinas' view about human freedom vis-à-vis his/her human *telos*, see Sagut (2012). Christopher Stephen Lutz has also pointed this out in his "A Short History of Alasdair MacIntyre" where he pointed out that the theme about the "unity of a whole life" is present in both the early and later

cessive attempt to realize it via our individual actions. The task of practical judgment then is to inquire whether or not the concrete decision and action that a particular agent is about to make in the here and the now realizes the end presented by the human intellect as the ultimate good. There is then a need for a practical judgment, which brings the recognition of the ultimate end to bear with the actual action and choices that the moral agent has to make. Practical judgment becomes a faculty that the agent has to exercise in order to discern which of the concrete options laid in front of him/her could serve as appropriate means to achieve his/her human good.

For MacIntyre, it is this commitment to the understanding of a distinctive 'human good' that allows the Thomistic-Aristotelian moral philosophy to admit a source of legitimation and evaluation for the concrete choices, dilemmas especially, that confront a specific moral agent[5]. In his 1990 Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University, MacIntyre even emphasized the need to arrive at first principles which will serve as *archê/principium* for human actions. These are the genuine human goods which could serve as 'ends' that will "provide a standard by reference to which our individual purposes, desires, interests and decisions can be evaluated as well or badly directed" (MacIntyre 1990a, 9). MacIntyre, however, clearly distinguishes Aquinas' First principles from Descartes' *Cogito*. He points out that much of postmodernism's critique against foundationalism is valid and yet they may not necessarily be used univocally against Aquinas (see MacIntyre 1990a, 13). MacIntyre argues that, unlike the protagonists of contemporary postmodernism, Aquinas agrees that the knowing agent 'genuinely knows' in the act of comprehension. Knowledge is not mere ideology or will to power. Yet, unlike Descartes who searches for absolute certainty over his foundations (the indubitable truths), Aquinas agrees that "one may, nonetheless, genuinely know, without as yet possessing that further knowledge of first principles" (MacIntyre 1990a, 16). For MacIntyre, the difference between Aquinas and Descartes is precisely in the fact that in Aquinas,

> we can know without as yet knowing that we know, while for
> the Cartesian… we must know that we know, since for the
> Cartesian it is always reference backwards to our starting-point
> that guarantees our knowledge, and hence, it is only through

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works of MacIntyre. He takes a particular interest in MacIntyre's point about religion where MacIntyre has vocally criticized the tendency to view 'religion as an activity that is divorced from other activities' (see Lutz 2004, 14).

[5] Aquinas' emphasis on the role of the 'good' in determining the 'end' of the human action is mentioned early in his *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics* (see 9-10). Lutz also writes that MacIntyre is committed to the claim that "only a teleological ethical theory can serve to ground objective, exceptionless, moral obligation" (Lutz 2004, 27). MacIntyre himself argues that 'one has to learn how to apply two kinds of distinction, that between what as activity or product merely seems to me good and what is really good… and that between what is good and best for me to do here and now given the limitations of my present state of education… and what is good and best as such" (MacIntyre 1990b, 127).

knowing that we know that we know. By contrast, for the Thomist our present knowledge involves reference forward to that knowledge of the *archê/principium* which will, if we achieve it, give us subsequent knowledge of the knowledge that we have (MacIntyre 1990a, 16).

Yet, it is this non-foundationalist orientation towards the appeal to the conception of the 'genuine good' of the human person that will lead to another important stage in the search for the appropriate moral principles that should govern human actions. The need to discern for a 'fitting human good'[6] becomes the most relevant invitation for concerned practical reasoners to engage in a *dialogue*. The story for this dialogue however is clouded with almost insurmountable difficulties. MacIntyre has repeatedly argued about the incommensurability and untranslatability of our pluralities in the modern time, and moral philosophy is not exempted from this challenge (see MacIntyre 1990b, 4)[7]. Yet, as MacIntyre has observed, if moral philosophy, as a science, is to progress in a manner that the natural sciences do, then the effort to commonly reflect on the concept of the 'human good' is a potent area for conversation. MacIntyre, however, is aware that this is far from an easy task, so much so that he wrote in the "Introduction" to *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (TRVME) that public lectures "can no longer be presented either on the basis of presupposed agreement or with the purpose of securing general agreement. The most that one can hope for is to render our disagreements more constructive" (MacIntyre 1990b, 8). But how are these disagreements rendered more constructive? MacIntyre asserts that the professed neutrality of modern meta-ethics theories is not the answer to this challenge, and "the only way to overcome differences in rival moral schemes is through respectful engagements with their traditions" (Lutz 2004, p. 29).

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[6] Early in MacIntyre's career, he had already struggled on the need to come up with the criterion or criteria through which the evaluation of the elected goods by particular moral agents are to be judged 'fitting' ends for the human person. In fact, Lutz would say that it is this particular commitment of MacIntyre for an authentic moral inquiry that would account for MacIntyre's several conversions throughout his life. Lutz even observed that "MacIntyre has been published as a Marxist and liberal Protestant philosopher of religion, as an atheist Hume scholar and historian of ethics, as a dissatisfied Aristotelian and as a Catholic Thomist" (Lutz 2004, 2).

[7] Lutz says that modern moral philosophy has to face the challenge posed in part by the 'interminable disagreements of philosophers.' He added that it is becoming a burden to deal with the fact that we have to continuously live together and regulate our social life despite the *absence* of a common philosophy. His claim is straightforward in describing our present predicament, "the problem is easy enough to see, but solutions to it seem impossible to find" (Lutz 2004, p. 2). Yet, he also pointed out that MacIntyre's response to this problem is neither authoritarian nor relativist. Hence he concluded his 'short history of Alasdair MacIntyre' with these words: "Alasdair MacIntyre did not make philosophical progress by discovering any set of universal rational principles; rather he worked his way toward a more coherent and more adequate ethical theory through *critical engagement* with the peculiar substantive rationalities of several different traditions in which he was enmeshed" (Lutz 2004, 28).

How is this *respectful engagement* being done? First, this presupposes a participant's acceptance of one's identity and a self-mastery. This makes it relevant for participants in a dialogue to engage in a deeper study of one's own tradition[8] in order to discern the ways by which such tradition may contribute to the larger dialogue where other accounts of the human good are also heard. MacIntyre's allegiance to the Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition allows him to argue that a moral philosopher understands moral philosophy as a craft similar to an artisan's appreciation of his work. This particular perspective on moral philosophy is important if the hope for 'progress' in moral reflection is to be sustained. He claims that "Every craft has a history and characteristically a history not yet completed" (MacIntyre 1990b, 127). Hence, it is important for this craft to understand itself by understanding its history, and yet such self-understanding is always open to, and will be greatly improved by, respectful engagements with others.

It can be recalled that MacIntyre's Gifford Lectures began with strong tones of pessimism, that is, as an account of how our disparate moral theories in modern times have evolved to become untranslatable and incommensurable even to the point where consensus and mutuality of understanding seems to be far-fetched. MacIntyre writes that,

> debate between fundamentally opposed standpoints does occur, but it is inevitably inconclusive. Each warring position characteristically appears irrefutable to its own adherents; indeed in its own terms and by its own standards of argument it *is* in practice irrefutable. But each warring position equally seems to its opponents to be insufficiently warranted by rational argument (MacIntyre 1990b, 7).

Given this condition, progress looks difficult and this is shown by the already obvious fact that we have never achieved a progress in moral reflection that is akin to the development achieved by natural sciences[9]. This is where,

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[8] MacIntyre proposes that Thomists will do well in proving the relevance of Aquinas in modern philosophy if they are to engage with Aquinas in un-Thomistic ways. Deeper study of one's tradition does not simply mean a manualist 'repetition' or 'invocation' of formulated principles as binding guides for the moral action of the human person in the here and now. MacIntyre is aware of the pitfalls of casuistry and repeatedly says that moral codes are born within a certain context, and it will be detrimental to moral reflection if we continue to use those moral codes without taking into mind the fact that the context of today is largely different from the context in which these codes were formulated (see MacIntyre 2007, 2). Hence, for MacIntyre, a fruitful enterprise of a Thomist in the contemporary time is to do a genealogy of his/her own tradition, and MacIntyre argues that the "genealogical narrative has the function of not arguing with, but of disclosing something about the beliefs, presuppositions and activities of some class of persons" (MacIntyre 1990a, p. 59). This kind of understanding of one's tradition is important before one can begin a fruitful (*respectful*) engagement with another tradition.

[9] MacIntyre's *After Virtue* begins with a chapter entitled, "A Disquieting Suggestion". In this chapter, he mentioned an imaginary world of science that has survived after a catastrophe. In this imaginary world, people continue to use terms of science like 'biology, chemistry, atoms and

MacIntyre hopes, a reconsideration of the Thomistic-Aristotelian moral philosophy that views itself as a craft-discipline may show its significant contribution (see Lutz 2004, 5 & 139).

MacIntyre argues that to be able to engage in moral philosophy as a craft, one must be able to do at least three things: 1) one must acquire the capacity to make the distinction between what seems to be good from what is really good,[10] 2) in relation to the first, one must be able to discern mistakes done in the past, and how to learn from them; one must also understand the limitations one had in the past, and the resources that she/he can use in order to surpass those limitations[11], and 3) one must also learn to make the distinction between what is good for him/her in the here and the now from that which is good for the human person unqualifiedly (see MacIntyre 1990b, 127)[12]. It is especially

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others, but they are already deprived from a proper understanding of the context in which these terms were originally used. MacIntyre claims that this will result in a disorder which will highlight the fact that the people, though they continue to use terms of science, will not be engaged in an authentic science. It is clear however that this is purely an imagined state of disorder in science, for what we see in reality is at least a progress in scientific data and discoveries. Yet, the imagery was used by MacIntyre to illustrate the kind of disorder that is felt, not in natural sciences but in the area of morality. It is here and elsewhere that MacIntyre highlights the difference, in terms of progress, between natural sciences and moral philosophy (see AV, 1-5).

[10] Aristotle (*NE* 1113a, 16) makes a distinction between 'what is of itself good and what is apparently good.' Cooper (1986, 127) also claims that Aristotle makes a distinction between absolute good (without qualification) or good by nature and the good for some particular person or from some particular person's point of view. He said that this is a contrast similar to that of the 'good' and the 'apparent good.' Aquinas' commentary on this text allows him to proceed to make the distinction between the virtuous and the vicious man, a distinction which we will deal with again later. For the meantime, let it be mentioned that Aquinas highlights Aristotle's point about the virtuous man as one who "correctly passes judgment on individual things that pertain to human activity. In each case that which is really good seems to him to be good" (*CNE*, 494).

[11] MacIntyre (1990b, 136) makes a point about the necessity for a community where its members are formed so as to become 'teachable learners.' Learning has to become a lifelong project and it has to resemble a journey, that is, a movement from the 'most primitive understanding of the good to a mature understanding of it'.

[12] Cooper also argues that prominent in Aristotle's conception of ends is the insistence about the 'ultimate end.' In Cooper's discussion, the talk about the ultimate end will also allow a discussion for a variety of ends that will be conceived as means towards the ultimate end. He argues for the plausibility of talking about a rationality that is open to a 'system of desire and pursuit that are oriented towards an underlying ultimate purpose' (see Cooper 1986, p. 96). But for MacIntyre, this conception of the good as leading towards an ultimate end will collapse without any conception of 'good' that is proper to the human person as a human person (MacIntyre 1990b, 138). It is this metaphysical conception of the human good that will provide the sense of our ethical choices, without which a conception of a unified life will seem absurd given the fact that "the variety and complexity of normal human capacities, needs and interests are such that any rationally planned life must identify a great variety of different ends, and not just one" (Cooper 1986, 94). Hence, MacIntyre argues for the need to discern the unqualified good of the human person as human person. For he is convinced that if we "take away the notion of essential nature, [if we] take away the corresponding notion of what is good and best for members of a specific kind who share such a nature… the Aristotelian scheme of the self which is to achieve good… will necessarily collapse" (MacIntyre 1990b, 138).

the conception of the third that becomes a useful guide in measuring up the quality of moral reasoning, given the fact that a moral agent exercises practical reasoning amidst the vicissitudes of his/her finite human existence[13]. MacIntyre himself gave the warning about the temporality of our own moral reasoning and claimed that practical reasoning 'not only requires new ways of applying the above distinctions but is in itself sometimes an outcome of new ways in which these distinctions are applied' (see MacIntyre 1990b, 127)[14]. MacIntyre further argues that each moral philosopher has to inquire about the 'good of the human person as human person', and every moral agent has to inquire about *his/her* good *as an individual person*. The answer of the individual moral agent somehow presupposes the answer of the philosopher's question. Hence, the moral philosopher could no longer ignore the relevance of his task to the day to day circumstances of the ordinary lay person. His answers are meant to become responsive to the daily concerns of the ordinary man[15]. MacIntyre is even quick to add that "there is no form of philosophical inquiry which is not practical in its implications, just as there is no practical enquiry that is not philosophical in its presupposition" (MacIntyre 1990b, 128). For MacIntyre, viewing moral philosophy as akin to a craft shall serve as corrective to the understanding of moral philosophy that is casuistic, and arguing that Aquinas' moral philosophy is a craft is also to claim that Aquinas' moral philosophy is more than the manuals of morality and is certainly not blind to the vicissitudes of practical concerns of individual moral reasoners.

Nevertheless, what gets highlighted in MacIntyre's exposition of Aquinas' moral philosophy is the understanding of the *good of the person qua human person* as necessarily related to the understanding of the *good of the person qua individual*[16] The understanding of the unqualified good of the human person is

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[13] MacIntyre argues that his *Dependent Rational Animal* (DRA) will both correct and further the arguments that he had already initiated in his earlier works. The correction that DRA provides is the re-assertion of the notion of a metaphysical biology that is informed by the conviction that human beings share the same biological make-up as most animals, and they are therefore vulnerable to many factors that could affect their development. MacIntyre insists in his DRA that one failure of most reflections about the condition of the human person is the non-recognition of the "nature and extent of human vulnerability and disability" (MacIntyre 1999, x).

[14] On a related note, Lutz discussed the objection of some thinkers, particularly Norman O. Dahl and Joan M. Franks, OP, to MacIntyre's claim that 'the best theories we can have are only the best theories so far." Reiterating MacIntyre's point, Lutz claims that "Like a craft that experiences real progress in methods and technology, so that its current standards are just 'the best so far', and remain open to improvement, a rational enquiry can do no more than establish, confirm, and at times, supplement or supplant its 'best theories so far' (See Lutz 2004, 105; cf. MacIntyre 1990b, 61-66).

[15] Lutz has pointed out that MacIntyre challenges the traditional distinction made between morality, normative ethics and meta-ethics. Lutz continues that for MacIntyre, "morality is about the pursuit of the good, which is understood through the study of ethics, so the distinction between morality and normative ethics is tenuous at best" (Lutz 2004, 8-9).

[16] MacIntyre argued in this regard that for Aristotle, "the individual will have to reason from some initial conception of what is good for him, being the type of person that he is, generally

not necessarily "restrictive" but is rather "instructive" of the understanding of what is good for the individual. What needs to be attended only is the cultivation of those *habits* and *virtues* that will help the moral agent discern and pursue the 'good' of the human person amidst the many practical concerns that she/he would have to deal with each day.

Attention to the moral formation of the human person

Phronesis or practical judgment is one of those virtues, if not the central virtue, that MacIntyre considers important in the moral agent's task of discerning his/her good as a human person. MacIntyre describes *phronesis* as the "exercise of a capacity to apply truths about what it is good for such and such a type of person or for persons as such to do generally and in certain types of situation to oneself on particular occasions" (MacIntyre 1988, 115-116). It is both a virtue a practical reasoner must aim to achieve and also a basic requirement for the development of virtues[17]. Following Aquinas, MacIntyre argues for the role of natural law and says that there is knowledge of natural law "which human beings have by nature and that, since we are all human beings after all, we can surely all judge equally… plain persons and philosophers or theologians alike" (MacIntyre 1990b, 135-136; also see O'Reilly 2014, 196; ST I-II, q. 94, a. 4). The innate inclination to that which is good for us as a person is something embedded in our nature.

However, natural law does not necessarily become evident to us when the practical reasoner begins to use them as principles to guide their practical actions[18]. The facility to discern what the natural law requires has to be *devel-*

circumstanced as he is, to the best supported view which he can discover of what is good as such for human beings as such; and then he will have to reason from that account of what is good and best as such to a conclusion about what it is best for him to achieve here and now in his particular situation" (MacIntyre 1988, 125).

[17] MacIntyre discusses this seeming circularity in the development of virtue vis-à-vis the exercise of *phronesis* and argues that this is not circular but is rather dialectical. It is worthwhile to quote MacIntyre here in length: "[I]n order to become adequately phronetic in judgment and in action, it is necessary to be guided by an adequate conception of the good and the best… We cannot judge and act rightly unless we aim at what is in fact good". Yet, "we cannot aim at what is good except on the basis of experience of right judgment and action". For MacIntyre, it is the dialectic relationship between our conception of the good and the experience of right judgment and action that will allow the moral agent 'to correct each in the light of the other' (see MacIntyre 1988, 118).

[18] Aquinas answers the question, "whether the natural law is the same in all men?" (ST Ia-IIae, q. 94, a. 4). In his discussion, Aquinas argued that "It is therefore evident that, as regards the general principles whether of speculative or of practical reason, truth or rectitude is the same for all, and is equally known by all. As to the proper conclusions of the speculative reason, the truth is the same for all, but is not equally known to all... But as to the proper conclusions of the practical reason, neither is the truth or rectitude the same for all, nor, where it is the same, it is equally known by all." Moreover, Aquinas added that, "we must say that the natural law, as to general principles, is the same for all, both as to the rectitude and as to knowledge. But as to certain knowledge of details, which are conclusions… it is the same for all in the majority of

oped, and it is here that the concerns for *formation* become central[19]. As stated above, MacIntyre himself argues that "in moving from the earliest and most primitive apprehensions of our good to a mature understanding of it we have to explore the meaning and use of such concepts as those of end (*telos*), happiness, action, passion and virtue. What is constant in this movement is the core of our initial apprehension, that is, we are to achieve an understanding of good in relation to ourselves as being, as animal, and as rational we shall have to engage with other members of the community in which our learning has to go on in such a way as to be teachable learners" (MacIntyre 1990b, 136-137). There are important components of this claim. First, this suggests that human reasoning, including moral reasoning, goes through a process of maturity as illustrated by the 'movement from the earliest and most primitive apprehensions of our good to a more mature understanding.' Secondly, this suggests that the discernment of the human good is done vis-à-vis the community where the moral agent dwells. That is, the presence of the other members of the community makes an undeniable contribution to the maturation of one's moral reasoning.

Addressing these components presupposes the admission that all moral reasoners have to go through formation. Moreover, this also requires recognition that part of the task in the area of morality is not only in allowing moral agents to have a variety of choices for their planned course of action or assuming that 'an autonomous decision is readily a responsible decision'. An equally important task in the development of moral reasoning is also 'in ensuring that the agent is provided with a suitable training or upbringing that will allow him/her to have the resources to *comprehend* his/her choice'. In other words, morality is not just about choices. It is also about forming and educating the individual who makes the choice so that she/he learns to discriminate the real good from an evil that takes the form of an apparent good[20]. The task of a mor-

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cases… and yet in some cases it may fail, both as to rectitude, by reason of certain obstacles, and as to knowledge, since in some the reason is perverted by passion, or evil habit, or an evil disposition or nature (…)". Claudia Baracchi also added that the acquisition of excellent virtues "are formed through repeated exercise and there is no discursive shortcuts to them" (Baracchi 2014, p. 110).

[19] MacIntyre claims that "practical reasoners enter the adult world with relationships, experiences, attitudes, and capacities that they bring with them from childhood to adolescence and that always to some significant, and often to some very large degree they are unable to discard and disown" (MacIntyre 1999, 82). Here, MacIntyre is clear in his point that the application of the general principles of natural law to the particular circumstances of the moral agent's day-to-day life are also highly influenced by the kind of upbringing and training that she/he had. Hence, the issue about forming the individual to become the kind of practical reasoner that she/he is remains to be one of the most urgent concerns in moral philosophy.

[20] On this regard, MacIntyre claims that "[O]nly a life whose actions have been directed by and whose passions have been disciplined and transformed by the practice of the moral and intellectual virtues and the social relationships involved in and defined by such practice will

al community is not simply in making sure that members of that community are not impeded in making their choice. The community is also tasked, and this latter task can in fact even be more crucial and more demanding, to *form* and *educate* its members so that they become suited to their responsibility as a moral agent[21].

Proceeding further in this task, MacIntyre has also named another important aspect of this process of formation, that is, to make sure that people begin to develop a community that makes it easy for them to become 'teachable learners'. It goes without saying that moral communities are to discern and practice those virtues that will allow the members to become 'teachable learners'[22]. MacIntyre points out that the instructions from parents and teachers, from homes and schools, shall point towards the "discrimination of the ends which one may pursue in the light of that ultimate end or good, which is the true good of one's kind" (MacIntyre 1990b, 137)[23].

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provide the kind of experience from which and about which reliable practical inferences and sound theoretical arguments about practice can be derived" (MacIntyre 1990a, 17).

[21] This is made explicit by the arguments articulated by MacIntyre in a chapter of his *Dependent Rational Animal*. "The political and social structures of the common good" (MacIntyre 1999, 129-146) argues that for a moral agent to achieve an independent practical reasoning that is disposed to a conception of a common good, such a person would have to be nourished in a political and social structure that considers the acknowledgment of the common good, in this case expressed by the virtue of acknowledged dependence brought by the realization that each member of the community is subject to human weakness and vulnerability. Hence, towards the end of the chapter he claims that "[W]hat matters is not only that in this kind of community children and the disabled are objects of care and attention. It matters also and correspondingly that those who are no longer children recognize in children what they once were, that those who are not yet disabled by age recognize in that old what they are moving towards becoming, and that those who are not ill or injured recognize in the ill and injured what they often have been and will be and always may be" (MacIntyre 1999, 146). What this suggests is that moral life also requires of us that we should succeed in creating a community whose practices will dispose the members to the life of particular virtues.

[22] MacIntyre argues that it is essential that each person is allowed to move from his/her initial apprehension of the good in the process of his/her engagement with the other members of the community. He claims that "[W]hat we grasp initially in understanding the binding force of the precepts of the natural law are the conditions for entering a community in which we may discover what further specifications our good has to be given" (MacIntyre 1990a, 136-137). What is crucial then is that the community must serve as venues for each moral agent to rationalize his/her option and it is in this process of rationalization that one admits of the possibility of being corrected by others. Without this openness for correction, formation also gets restrained (Sagut 2014, footnote 37).

[23] MacIntyre's further discussion of this matter (MacIntyre 1990b, 137ff) has centered on the first five questions of ST Ia-IIae. In MacIntyre's supplemental discussion on the matter, it has become clear that one could not substantially talk about the *discrimination* of goods without a grasp of what the good, especially the ultimate good, consists in. Here is where MacIntyre's interest in Aquinas' definition of the human good becomes important. In fact, MacIntyre has pointed out that Aquinas' understanding of the ultimate good has departed from the traditional understanding of most Aristotelians of his time. But this was done not because Aquinas was

This leads back to the classical concern in Aristotle regarding the development of habits. Habits provide the facility for the moral agent to act[24]. In fact, habits become the immediate guide for the actions of most people, especially those who do not necessarily engage in constant inquiry in moral philosophy[25]. The ordinary lay practitioners of moral agency mostly will rely on their habits in most of their decisions. MacIntyre even says that "there are agents who do not have to explicitly raise a question in moral philosophy. These are the ones who were initiated into the practice of virtues and their knowledge of the good is brought about by "connaturality" (see MacIntyre 1990b, 128-129). Along this line of thinking, decision-making does not always have to be characterized by 'opposition of alternatives'. A moral agent does not have to struggle in *every* decision making process so as to suppose that the absence of a struggle between options in the act of making a decision, the case where the agent is not given a sufficient range of alternatives in the decision about to be made, will connote a vitiation of the agent's free moral agency. Some decisions remain *free* even if the struggle between options and alternatives no longer characterizes the process. A decision remains free even if there is only one option to take. In some cases, in fact, the struggle can well be a sign of the absence of 'connaturality'[26] and it can be symptomatic more of a lack of freedom rather than be a basic affirmation that the act is free[27].

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rejecting Aristotle, but because "he was trying to be a better Aristotelian than Aristotle" (MacIntyre 1990b, 137).

[24] Baracchi argues that habits enjoy a certain remarkable degree of stability: "Habits are the formations that come to be layered and structure what nature has left unstructured" (Baracchi 2014, p. 117). Hence, when acquired, "habits cannot be easily shed, dismantled, as it were, at will. One can work on deactivating them, on replacing them with other habits… But it is an arduous task" (Barrachi 2014, p. 118).

[25] McInerny argues that "[I]f habit, the settled disposition to act in one way rather than another, is a fact of moral life, it is obviously of the greatest consequence to acquire habits of the appropriate kind, good habits, virtues" (McInerny 1997, 92).

[26] It shall however be mentioned that connaturality will not fully guarantee the perfection of a person's moral agency. MacInerny has powerfully pointed out the pitfalls of the moral argument that assigns primacy to human conscience and yet ignores the fact that conscience need to be formed because an erroneous conscience could not safeguard the moral quality of the action that it would prescribe. Following Aquinas, Inerny argues that even "if conscience obliges, it does not necessarily excuse" (McInerny 1997, p. 112). Martina Stepinova, OP also claims that "conscience is the human being's highest criterion for conduct, although the conscience could be wrong in respect to wrong knowing" (Stepinova 2011, 336).

[27] Selling has pointed out that "to write that intention 'is centered in choice' goes directly contrary to what Aquinas writes in his article on intention as the primary activity of the will in I-II, 12, 'intention is an act of the will in regard to the end" (Selling 2010, 388). This suggests that if we are to view human freedom via the Thomistic conception of the human action, freedom is guaranteed, not by the availability of choices – especially if some of those choices are contrary to the human good – but in the disposition of the human person to align the choice with the intended human good. Selling argues further that for Aquinas, "the voluntary act is a single, though composite, event that is always driven by the pursuit of an end" (Selling 2010, 389).

Interestingly however, this type of connaturality does not happen over-night. This requires commitment and a resolute decision to pursue a particular course of action. Aquinas argues that the voluntary decision of the human person is always a product of the interplay of one's reason, will or appetite and even passions[28]. Habits may strengthen the passions of the person, and so it is important to set these passions aright by setting one's habits aright (See Sagut 2014, 344-347, & Murphy 2011, 831). This is the ideal state where the lower faculties of the human person, especially passions and desires, already become trusted guides for moral decisions. In other words, setting the passions and the habits aright should be understood to mean that one has been able to identify correctly one's good as a human being and has trained his/her appetite to in-cline oneself to that which is really good for him/her as a human person. The good of the human person as an individual, that good which the individual de-sires and is inclined to do, is no longer opposed to the human good understood *unqualifiedly*. That is, the discernment of that good that is proper to the human person as human person has already become instructive for, and not restrictive of, what the individual desires as an individual[29].

MacIntyre, in emphasizing the need to *form* our habits, has echoed Aristo-tle's repeated emphasis in the *Politics* and *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle makes a distinction between the vicious, the akratic, the enkratic and the virtu-ous. The first and the last are those people who have identified their desires with their understanding of the good of the human person *as* human person, while the second and third types (the *akratic* and *enkratic*) are those whose desires are in conflict with what they have discerned as the good of the human person as human person (MacIntyre 1988, 128; also see Sagut 2014, 344-345) The first group hosts those individuals who have equated their individual good with what they apprehend as the human good unqualifiedly, while the latter are those whose perceived individual good (desires) are in conflict with what they have objectively discerned as *the* human good. The second group (between the *akratic* and the *enkratic*) however allows us to distinguish between, on the one hand, those who have successfully managed to influence their passion with their commitment to the unqualified human good so much so that they have endeavored and have succeeded to *control* their passions on behalf of their understanding of what is *really* good for them as human persons. This is what

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[28] Sagut (2011, 621) has emphasized the role that passions and emotions may play in the act of making a choice. For both Aristotle and Aquinas, moral philosophy could not totally ignore the role that 'inclinations' play in human actions, and so it becomes equally important to include as a concern of moral philosophy the talk about forming such desires and inclinations.

[29] Aquinas says that "all virtuous men take pleasure in the same things – virtuous operations – which are naturally pleasurable to men according to right reason" (*CNE*, 156). He further add-ed that there is "no virtuous person who does not enjoy the good deeds he does. He (referring to Aristotle) proves this inductively by saying that no one will call the man just who does not re-joice in doing just deeds… the act of a virtuous man is agreeable to him according to proper habit, and as a consequence he derives pleasure from it" (*CNE*, 158).

Aristotle would call as the *enkratic* human person. MacIntyre himself describes the *enkratic person* as one who "knows what is good and rational to do and does it, but his passions have not yet been fully transformed… the *enkratic* person does what the rational and virtuous person does, but his motivations are not the same as those of the fully virtuous" (MacIntyre 1988, 128). On the other hand, there are those who have fallen into the trap of their desires and emotions, and whose appetites have dominated over their reason to the point of subverting what reason has presented to be good. These are people who have doubts about the moral quality of their action and yet, due to the strength of the urges, could not follow the dictate of the intellect to pursue that which is presented by reason as the right action. These people are those who Aristotle calls the *akratic* persons. The akratic persons are those who have been initiated into the relevant principles and yet are reluctant in their moral life because they, primarily, could hardly give up that which they had already been used to doing. MacIntyre describes the akratic person as one whose "passions are not yet under his rational control, because in one way or another, his knowledge of what is good is not brought to bear on them" (MacIntyre 1988, 128). McInerny describes the akratic person as 'defective': he "knows what he ought to do, and he does not do it" (McInerny 1997, 106). *Akratics* are prone to regrets, especially if they soon realize the consequences of their actions. C.D.C. Reeve would liken them to those who had been prohibited by their doctors to take fatty foods and yet could not resist the invitation of an ice cream or pork and eat them, only to regret later about not having been able to control their appetite and therefore suffer an undesirable consequence (Reeve 1998, p. xxxvi). Or, they could be likened to one who had been prescribed with a daily 30-minute physical exercise as a way of addressing a problem in an important organ of the body and yet could not do the doctor's advice because he/she could not resist the temptation to extend sleep in the morning. Or, to use a rather concrete example of a moral dilemma, this could be likened to a married man/woman who knows that she/he is supposed to be faithful to her/his husband/wife, and yet falls into the trap of being involved in a sexual relationship with another person. The stories of regrets that resulted from these actions are indeed a familiar refrain in the contemporary culture.

Following MacIntyre then, it could be said that both the *enkratic* and the *akratic* persons would have to go through the struggle of having to sort out the conflict of one's desires and their understanding of the good of the human person as human person as they determine their individual good at particular times[30]. MacIntyre even claims that both are in the process of transition and they represent moments of incomplete development (MacIntyre 1988, 128). The difference however is that the *enkratic* has managed to allow his/her rea-

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[30] Following the discussions above (see footnote # 26), this suggests a lack of 'connaturality' and is seen in this tradition as a sign of immaturity in moral reasoning rather than a paradigmatic instance of exercising one's freedom.

son to win over his/her lower faculties or desires. The *akratic's* struggle, on the other hand, has ended with the reverse, for she/he has allowed the reign of lower appetites (desire) over reason (Sagut 2014, 344-345).

Yet, in Aristotle, as well as in Aquinas and MacIntyre, the *enkratic* person is not even the ideal type of a moral agent (MacIntyre 1988, 128). The Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition that MacIntyre subscribes to has argued that the virtuous person is different from the *enkratic* person because virtue is characterized by 'connaturality' while the *enkratic* person is precisely going through the struggle of following his/her reason despite his/her appetition. The ideal then is to lessen, if not to eradicate, the struggle between 'that which we desire' with 'that which we perceive to be the human good unqualifiedly.' In other words, virtue and the perfection of human freedom are best guaranteed not by conflict but by connaturality[31]. Aquinas claims that 'for a thing to be desired, it has to be perceived as good. A person then desires that which appears good' (see *CNE*, 515). Moreover, it is precisely the nature of the virtuous person to pass judgment correctly on things related to his/her activity. Hence, for the virtuous person, "that which is really good seems to him to be good" (*CNE*, 494).

Aquinas is however also clear in his warning that not all instances of connaturality of the intellect and the lower appetites are sure signs of the moral quality of an action (see McInerny 1997, 109-113). For it could also happen that the intellect gets mistaken in its understanding of the unqualified human good. There is in Aristotle and Aquinas a remark about the apparent good, that is, that some individuals have mistakenly identified something as good only to realize that it has actually turned out to be evil (see Reeve 1998, xxxv ff). A failure to make this proper discernment between the real and the apparent good will already constitute a problem in moral life[32], for evil does not present

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[31] Aquinas has argued that "every virtuous person loves the activities of his own virtue as something agreeable to him. To the extent that the just man loves justice he will take pleasure in doing justice. It is universally true that the virtuous operations are pleasurable to virtuous persons who love virtue" (*CNE*, 155).

[32] The concern about the 'good' as an end – that has to be elected by 'reason' and should be tended by the will, has of course been made more complicated by questions raised especially in recent debates in bioethics. Though this matter is not the explicit concern of the present text, the debates between NNLT which argues that "moral responsibility is to be found first and foremost in one's choosing", (Flannery 2013, 92) and those natural law theorists who continue to maintain that "since choice is a sort of a conclusion of counsel… it is necessary that the goodness of the end and the goodness of that which is ordered toward the end coincide with the will of the person choosing" (Flannery 2013, p. 100) is instructive about the difficulty of arriving at common rules that would serve as guides for practical reasoners in arriving at a morally guaranteed course of action. These perplexities will have to remind us of the importance of both the cultivation of the virtue of *phronesis* among ordinary moral reasoners and the continuous efforts of moral philosophers to provide instructions and norms that will help guide the day-to-day ethical practice of the former. As Baracchi counsels, "Ethics is, then, about establishing principles, *i.e.*, by describing facts and allowing them to become manifest, luminous. Ethics is not absolutely precise, precisely

itself as an evil but rather as a good. Mistakes in moral decisions are precisely due to the *confusion* between the *real* good and the *evil* that presents itself as an *apparent* good[33].

Nevertheless, even if the moral agent has already been initiated into the process of discerning the demands of natural law, moral responsibility continues to be exercised in one's custody over his/her appetites, so that he/she aligns the inclinations with what is *really* the good for the human person as human person[34]. This capacity (to make the distinction between the real good from an evil that presents itself as apparently good) is what separates the virtuous from the vicious. The vicious and virtuous men are the same inasmuch as their appetites are identified with what they perceive as good 'to be done'. Yet their difference is between the failure of one to properly discern the human good and the success of the other at having correctly discerned such good.

The distinction between the virtuous and the vicious is important because character affects the way a person makes choices. Behavior is a color of our perception, for as Aristotle affirms, "according to the character of each man, so does the end seem to him" (*NE*, 1114a, 32)[35]. MacIntyre's insistence on the link between the moral philosopher who is adept in the theoretical endeavor to raise and answer the question about the human good and the ordinary moral agents who need not raise this question every time but will have to trust their inclinations in their intimation of the good, will suggest that for some, if not most people, it is the habit that becomes the guide for moral decisions[36]. Hence, the formation of the habits of the human person is an important component in one's moral growth. The kind of activities, the kind of exposures, the kind of literature that one reads and the kind of advocacies that one joins are among the examples of those factors that may affect one's progress in moral life. Aquinas says this in affirmation of what Aristotle said about the voluntariness of one's vice: "since a man in some measure is the cause of his own evil by reason of his continual sinning… it follows that he himself is also the cause of the imaginative reaction that follows such a habit, *i.e.*, of the appearance by which this thing seems to be good in itself" (*CNE*, 520). What this Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition has affirmed is the fact that the moral life of the human person constitutes the unity of the person's life-story. Personal choices in the particular stages of one's moral growth are connected, and it's the totality of one's life-

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as it undertakes to account for principles "beautifully" and adhere to the multiplicity and fluctuation of phenomena" (Baracchi 2012, 108).

[33] For Aquinas, this will even constitute the vice. He will argue that pleasure can cause many to err in their judgment about "the distinction between good and evil." Hence, Aquinas argues, vicious individuals "desire as good the pleasurable, which is not good, and seek to avoid as evil that which is for them painful but in itself good" (*CNE*, 495).

[34] This should not of course ignore the difficulty already mentioned above in footnote # 31.

[35] McInerny (1997, 102) argues that "[A]s a man is, so does the end seem to him".

[36] Aquinas even admits that "the judgment, by which a man accounts a thing good in itself and absolutely, arises from the inclination of habit" (*CNE*, 171).

narrative that will mostly color one's choices[37]. Hence, the kind of initiation and formation that are provided for the human person becomes an important component for securing the moral quality of one's actions.

The role of "habit-forming practices"

The emphasis on upbringing and formation leads naturally to talk about the importance of habit-forming practices. Moral philosophy is nurtured by a practice precisely because it is the practice that builds the character of the agent. Character-building is a project that is completed in time, and it requires commitment for a repeated performance of actions[38], hence, a practice. MacIntyre is insistent on the point of a relevant practice that should partner the development of a character and a virtue. He argues about the 'goods' of a practice that can be classified as either external goods or internal goods, and insists that though both goods are important, only the internal goods are habit-forming while the external goods can oftentimes sidetrack one from the genuine pursuit of the virtues[39].

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[37] Related to this point is the question of how moral dilemmas are approached by the Thomistic-Aristotelian conception of moral inquiries. Dilemmas, as portrayed in Jean-Paul Sartre's play *Dirty Hands*, present an undeniable challenge for contemporary moral reasoners. MacIntyre took this theme and published the article "Moral Dilemmas" (1990) where he made a distinction between *perplexus simpliciter* and *perplexus secundum quid*. The importance of making this distinction is highlighted by the emphasis placed on the life-narrative's influence on the person's particular choices because MacIntyre would insist, following Aquinas, that there are hardly any instance of *perplexus simpliciter* which could lead us to make choices that are hardly aligned to the narrative that we write about who we are. He writes, "For Aquinas in allowing that one can be *perplexus secundum quid* does recognize that one may seem to oneself to be in an irresolvable dilemma, to be *perplexus simpliciter*. What one has to remind oneself is that this cannot really be so; what one must be is *perplexus secundum quid*, perplexed indeed but only relative to some factor, identification of which will be the key to resolving the dilemma" (MacIntyre 1990c, 381). In a related point, McInerny claims that "the moral life is a continuum, not episodic as if it were composed of discontinuous *puncta* or moments" (McInerny 1997, 93). This was the reason why he takes interest in Bertrand Russell's claim in the latter's autobiography that at one time, he (Russell) "suddenly" realized that he no longer loves his wife, for McInerny argues that "such thunderbolt alterations of who we are, what we are, the self that is ours, hardly seem paradigmatic of what it is like to come to a decision that is momentous for our lives" (McInerny 1997, 92).

[38] Baracchi, despite claiming that "ethics is about establishing principles" (Baracchi 2012, 108; see footnote # 31 above), even claims that since there is "no artful technique, *tekne*, able to provide a prescriptive ethical code *stricto sensu*", then "ethical reflection" even if it "would provide the intellectual analyses and clarifications propaedeutic to a more skillful encounter with what is the case", "could *in no way replace practical upbringing (the formation of character)*" (Baracchi 2012, 109 – italics is mine).

[39] MacIntyre even claims that "if in a particular society the pursuit of external goods were to become dominant, then the concept of the virtues might suffer first attrition and then perhaps something near total effacement" (MacIntyre 2007, 196). Similarly, MacIntyre warns that "without the virtues, there could be a recognition only of… external goods and not at all of internal goods" (MacIntyre 2007, 196). While this sounds to be too ideal and readily dismissive of the inherent role even of external goods in the flourishing of individuals, it may be well to recall that

MacIntyre informs his readers about his own exposure in a culture from his native land that retells the people's practices through the stories passed on from one generation to another. Lutz illustrates this when he traces the life of the young MacIntyre as one who had the privilege of living the boundaries of two cultures: the modern (Enlightenment) culture of the educated European and the peasant culture of Scotland (see Lutz 2004, 11-12; also see Borradori 1994, 139-140). It is through the stories of the latter that MacIntyre would remind his readers about the role that practices play in the formation of habits, which will eventually inform the kind of virtue or vice that one could possibly possess.

To argue that a moral agent is capable of making momentous decisions that can be isolated from the main narrative of that agent's life is almost equivalent to arguing for a belief in a myth. While it can sometimes appear that some decisions are momentous, as the one told by McInerny about the decision of Bertrand Russell to leave his wife, closer examination of moral life will show that decisions are connected and that a momentous choice is a culmination of a series of little decisions that are made each day. What gets unnoticed are the little choices and decisions that eventually dispose a person to certain things and that eventually commits him/her to a particular story about the good that he/she wants to unfold in his/her life. Hence the relationship between a person's view about the human good, the kind of upbringing and formation that he is provided with or by which he was brought up, and the kind of practices that support his chosen path for formation cannot be ignored. One's commitment to a particular understanding of what is good for the human person will certainly be colored by the kind of upbringing that he has experienced, and will therefore commit him to certain forms of practices. All these are constitutive of what will eventually turn out to become the goods that an individual will identify as something fitted for himself/herself.

An example that MacIntyre uses is the practice of chess as a board game (MacIntyre 2007, 188). Chess-playing as a practice has goods internal to itself. These goods include the cultivation of one's memory, critical thinking, and camaraderie with ones playmates. There are also goods external to the practice of chess: recognition in a chess club, monetary award that one gets from a chess contest, a scholarship that a good chess player gets from a sponsoring University, etc[40]. Crucial to the practice of chess is to make sure that the agent concentrates on the achievement of the internal goods, and that his pursuit of the external goods is conditioned only by the need to enhance the internal goods, that is, the honing of skills and capacities of a chess player (like the scholarship in a school as a means of ensuring that his training to play chess will continue). Only in this way will a practice be nourished, and only in this

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the context of MacIntyre's discussion here is to emphasis mainly the close link between virtues and the internal goods of the practice.

[40] MacIntyre mentions the goods of "prestige, status and money" (MacIntyre 2007, 188).

way will the practice be helpful in securing the skills and virtues that are proper for the flourishing of the human person[41].

What is important in this conception of practice is the emphasis on the needed discipline to commit oneself to repeated actions. Repetitions alone, however, are not guarantees for virtue-formation. The fact that one repeats the act does not immediately tell us that one develops the virtue that is constitutive of a character related to the act. One reason for this is the fact that one's repeated actions can even lead to the development of a vice, since repeated acts of injustice will form an unjust person, or repeated acts of gambling could make an otherwise upright person a gambler[42]. Furthermore, even when the goods pursued are virtue-forming, it is perhaps also important to note that some repeated actions end up becoming a *mechanical routine* instead of virtuous. When repetitions end up becoming a routine, there is in fact great doubt about the building up of character[43].

An example that can be cited here is the challenge that confronts schools in their attempt to form the character of their students. This is especially true for Catholic schools, whose explicit efforts are oriented towards contributing to the religious formation of their students[44]. Repeated actions in the sacraments and sacramentals are oftentimes expected to produce the consequence of character-building. Repeated exposures to the slums and the lives of the marginalized are likewise expected to develop in them love for the poor. But, these schools would also have to be vigilant throughout the process, because it is equally true that not all students who have gone through the rigors of these repetitions have developed the desired character. In fact, the opposite sometimes happens: students could end up getting tired of going to Mass and would eventually resent the idea of being 'forced' (as they sometimes perceive the regulations to be compelling) to go through the discipline. The attendance has

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[41] MacIntyre argues that "[E]very practice requires a certain kind of relationship between those who participate in it. Now the virtues are those goods by reference to which, whether we like it or not, we define our relationships to those other people with whom we share the kind of purposes and standards which inform practices" (MacIntyre 2007, 191).

[42] MacIntyre also counsels that "[W]here the virtues are required, the vices also may flourish. It is just that the vicious and the mean-spirited rely on the virtues of others for the practices in which they engage to flourish and also deny themselves the experience of achieving those internal goods which may reward even not the very good" practitioners (MacIntyre 2007, 193).

[43] Sidney Winter (2013) used the term 'habit' to mean 'routine.' His low regard for habits, as contrasted to deliberate action, is precisely premised by the inadequacy of 'routines' to provide us reasons for actions. The study, however, is interesting because despite the low regard for habit or routine, the author could not also totally ignore the influence of habits in human actions when he affirms that given one's belief in free will, it becomes hard to bear that "most of daily life is driven by automatic, non-conscious mental processes" (Winter 2013, 135; see also Bargh and Chartrand 1999).

[44] Thomas C. Fox wrote an article that features the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies and describes their work as "running a Catholic educational institution deeply committed to liberation and justice and aimed at the transformation of the world" (Fox 2010, 6).

become a routine, that is, it has sometimes been perceived as simply a way of satisfying an inescapable requirement. This is a case of a practice that has become a routine where the goods identified by these students in their practice of 'regularly attending' the religious observance are external to the very practice of religiosity. It is the 'recognition and other incentives' that sometimes present themselves as the most immediate end of the act, and so the 'goods' internal to the practice are clouded with these goods that are merely external to it. Hence, in such cases, the ends of virtue-formation and character-building hardly get realized.

Nevertheless, there is reason to maintain the claim that a 'practice' contributes to the character-building of people. Revisiting some practices in rural Philippines could, for example, attest to some practices that have helped shape the development of several virtues among members of the community. One important practice that could be cited here is the *dayong system* among the Bisayas (particularly those from the rural community of Maco, Compostela Valley, Philippines). The word *dayong* is a Visayan term which means 'to carry on shoulders by two or more persons'[45]. Hence, the *dayong system* is a form of a collaborative effort that is meant to assist bereaving members of the community in the process of honoring and burying their dead[46]. Concrete measures of assistance are seen in the donations that the members contribute to the bereaved family. The donations could include food during the wake, financial assistance for the burial, liquor (rhum and *Tuba* especially) and other goods. Normally, the organization is governed by an 'honor-system', as there is no binding contract that compels all the members. Each is aware that, upon learning the news about the death of a member, they need not be told to bring their contributions to the home of the dead. No accounting is done and yet none would fail to give. The ultimate responsibility of the members, particularly the male members, of the *dayong* system is the 'concrete act of carrying the dead's coffin' on the way to the cemetery.

Another notable practice in rural Maco, Davao, Philippines is the *Lusong*. This is the cooperation established by small farmers in the barrio of Anibongan, Maco, Compostela Valley, and there is reason to believe that the practice is patterned after an existing arrangement seen by its members from elsewhere. In this organization, there is an agreement that all the members shall mutually assist each family during planting and harvest seasons. The name of the practice was taken from the Cebuano[47] term for the wooden rice mortar that is often seen in the rural areas of the Philippines, particularly among the rice farmers of the South. The more interesting part of rice pounding is when it is

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[45] http://translate.sandayong.com/cebuano/english/dayong, retrieved on August 14, 2014.

[46] The author has looked exhaustively for written literature attesting to this practice but is unable to find any. The descriptions written here are descriptions of the author's personal immersion in this practice which he learned during his teens in the province of Davao, Philippines.

[47] Cebuano is one of the major languages in the Philippines.

done by three or more persons, as the process would require that their movements would have to be properly coordinated so that their mortars will not hit one another. Following the logic of collaborative and cooperative movement required for rice pounding using the *lusong*, farmer-members of a *Lusong* create a coordinated movement which requires members to assist one another in the planting and harvesting of rice. The group then would have to decide whose paddies shall be planted first and whose next until all members have their paddies planted. Normally, they will prioritize the paddies in the upper hill so they could also pass the water supply from one paddy to another. The practice lessens the load of each at the time when he has to plant in or harvest from his rice field. Needless to say, as the practice promotes cooperation, collaboration and camaraderie, it also lessens the instances of competition[48].

The two examples given above are indigenous Filipino illustrations of what MacIntyre could mean by a practice. These repeated involvements in the activities of the small organization are certainly formative. They develop virtues like solidarity, for example. Kids who are immersed into this practice during their formative years will have the opportunity to develop in their psyche the idea of helping and mutually assisting one another within at least their neighborhood, so much so that when the time comes that they would have to continue the craft of their parents, like rice-farming, they would no longer second-guess and calculate as to whether engaging in these acts of solidarity is beneficial or not. The practice has become part of their character as members of the community, and it has become almost *connatural* for them to judge the act of mutually assisting one another as proper. Unfortunately, the practice is slowly waning even among the communities of farmers in Southern Philippines where the author had first seen it, because rice-farming is increasingly treated as work that is only proper for the illiterate and uneducated.

MacIntyre's call then in emphasizing this Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition in moral philosophy can be understood as a way of inviting us to think of our moral life as a unified whole. Morality is never to be seen as a separate realm from academic moral philosophy. Instead, the latter exists precisely because of the former. The sense of why we have to do moral philosophy is the fact that we have to be properly guided in our existential morality.

Moreover, we are also reminded that identifying the proper moral codes, and knowing the principles that are aligned with the human good, will not suffice to make us existential moral beings. An important part of our morality is our appetite. Hence, as it is important to train the intellect to know the first principles, it is also equally important to train the appetite in order to desire that which has been identified by the intellect as good. Failure in either task will constitute a problem in existential conduct.

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[48] One blogger even highlighted this in his comment on the research done by Thomas Talhelm, who argued that rice farming promotes cooperation among rice farmers (see Biello 2014).

Hence, if appetition towards the good is as important as intellection of the true, then it is an equally important task to form the appetites. Desires would have to be trained so that they become connatural with the apprehension of the higher faculty of reason. Yet, the process of forming the appetites requires a structure. It demands a constant affirmation of the commitment to the human good through the individual action that one commits himself to each day. Such constant affirmation in one's actions can of course be ably aided by the practices that will form the members of the community, especially the young and neophytes, to journey towards building a character that will color the way they perceive the realities around them[49]. As McInerny would say, "in moral matters, one's appetitive condition with respect to the things being talked about can exercise a more direct influence", and following Aristotle he would even claim, "the good man is the measure of things" (McInerny 1997, 103). Such claims will not be alien to Alasdair MacIntyre as well.

Summary

The article is an attempt to articulate MacIntyre's characterization of the Thomistic-Aristotelian moral theory, which he defends as being a superior account of moral philosophy. MacIntyre argues that we could not possibly come up with a neutral moral standard to guide our actions, that is, that our practical decisions and actions are largely influenced by our adherence to a particular tradition, and that our moral choices are always a product of our upbringing that has oriented us towards a particular understanding of the good. He then takes upon himself the task of articulating the core of a Thomistic-Aristotelian tradition, particularly its understanding of the human good, with the hope of showing the superiority of its narrative over its rivals. Moreover, this article argues that given MacIntyre's emphasis on Thomistic-Aristotelian theory, moral philosophy could not and should not ignore the contribution of moral formation as an important component of moral philosophy, which should be concerned not only with the search for the legitimate foundations of moral theories, but also with an account of how ordinary people actually make their moral choices.

Key words: MacIntyre, Thomistic-Aristotelian Moral Philosophy, Human Good, Practices, moral formation.

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[49] MacIntyre affirms this in *DRA* when he says that for human persons to exercise their independent practical reasoning, they will need those relationships which will develop their ability "to evaluate, modify or reject our own practical judgment" so that they will be equipped to make rational choices and possess the ability to stand back from their desires, "so as to be able to enquire rationally what the pursuit of our good here and now requires and how our desires must be directed and, if necessary, re-educated, if we are to attain it" (MacIntyre 1999, 83).