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SEÇÃO: ÉTICA E FILOSOFIA POLÍTICA

The three-dimensional structure of contemporary virtue ethics: An analysis based on Alasdair MacIntyre

A estrutura tridimensional da ética das virtudes contemporânea: Uma análise a partir de Alasdair MacIntyre

La estructura tridimensional de la ética de la virtud contemporánea: Un análisis basado en Alasdair MacIntyre

José Elielton de Sousa[1]
orcid.org/0000-0002-5288-0703
jose_elielton@yahoo.com.br

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Abstract: Alasdair MacIntyre elaborates his proposal for ethics of virtues anchored in recognition of the animal identity of the human being, together with the vulnerability and dependence to which we are subjected as biologically constituted animals, but without relating it to the environmental issues arising from our animal condition. Thus, we intend to expand MacIntyre's virtue ethics through the interweaving of his concepts of human animality, flourishing and virtues, which expose a type of relationship between the human being and nature that requires an entirely new and different set of virtues than those until then thematized by him: the virtues of shared responsibility.

Keywords: human animality, virtues of independence, virtues of acknowledged dependence, virtues of shared responsibility

Resumo: Alasdair MacIntyre elabora uma proposta de uma ética das virtudes ancorada no reconhecimento da identidade animal do ser humano, juntamente com a vulnerabilidade e dependência às quais estamos submetidos enquanto animais biologicamente constituídos, mas sem relacioná-las às questões ambientais decorrentes dessa nossa condição animal. Assim, pretendo ampliar a ética das virtudes de MacIntyre, por meio do entrelaçamento de seus conceitos de animalidade humana, florescimento e virtudes, os quais expõem um tipo de relação entre o ser humano e a natureza que requer um conjunto de virtudes inteiramente novo e diferente daqueles até então tematizados por ele: as virtudes da responsabilidade compartilhada.

Palavras-Chave: animalidade humana; virtudes da independência; virtudes da dependência reconhecida; virtudes da responsabilidade compartilhada.

Resumen: Alasdair MacIntyre desarrolla una propuesta de una ética de las virtudes anclada en el reconocimiento de la identidad animal del ser humano, junto con la vulnerabilidad y dependencia a la que estamos sometidos, como animales biológicamente constituidos, pero sin relacionarla con las cuestiones ambientales derivadas de nuestra condición animal. Por lo tanto, pretendemos expandir la ética de las virtudes de MacIntyre, a través del entrelazamiento de sus conceptos de animalidad humana, florecimiento y virtudes, que exponen un tipo de relación entre los seres humanos y la naturaleza que requiere un conjunto de virtudes completamente nuevo y diferente a los previamente tematizados por él: las virtudes de la responsabilidad compartida.

Palabras clave: animalidad humana; virtudes de la independencia; virtudes de la dependencia reconocida; virtudes de la responsabilidad compartida.

[1] Universidade Federal do Piauí (UFPI),Teresina, PI, Piauí.

Introduction

The contemporary rehabilitation of virtue ethics has been provoking a huge impact on today's moral debate, pointing out new possibilities for an ethical approach and innovating in terms of the themes and authors to be addressed. Most forms of virtue ethics today are based on Aristotle's account. Its contemporary representatives, including Gertrude Elizabeth Ascombe, Peter Geach, Philippa Foot, Rosalind Hursthouse, Alasdair MacIntyre and John McDowell, are strongly committed to the Aristotelian tradition. Notably, at least three of these philosophers – Anscombe, Geach and MacIntyre – also commit to Thomism. However, although they begin with Aristotelianism, not all contemporary versions of virtue ethics are Aristotelian; they admit other theoretical orientations, most especially towards the Stoicism (Martha Nussbaum), Nietzsche (Christine Swanton) and Hume (the last works by Michael Slote).

Thus, in addition to the classic questions involving the notion of virtue as fundamental to the ethical enterprise, these contemporary versions of virtue ethics have been striving to address current ethical issues such as the role of emotions in moral deliberation, the question of self-love and care in moral psychology or even the question of human vulnerability and fragility. However, despite this theoretical effort, some topics on the current philosophical agenda have not yet occupied their due space within virtue ethics, primarily gender questions, ethnic-racial questions and environmental questions. When a male or female author addresses these questions, they are not treated as the main object of analysis and reflection, demanding subsequent improvements from their male and female interlocutors. This is the case, for example, of Alasdair MacIntyre, one of the main protagonists of the movement for the contemporary rehabilitation of virtue ethics. In *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999), he proposes a virtue ethics rooted in the recognition of humans' animal identity, together with their vulnerability and dependence, as biologically constituted animals, but without relating it to the environmental issues arising from our animal condition. MacIntyre deepens his understanding of virtues by thematizing the relationship between human animality, flourishing and virtues from a naturalistic perspective, directing his reflection towards a normative dimension that goes beyond subjective and intersubjective human relationships. Nevertheless, his virtue ethics still seems limited to anthropocentric issues, as he does not address the risks arising from the Anthropocene crisis for biologically constituted beings such as humans.

In this sense, it is crucial to expand MacIntyre's virtue ethics, particularly by intertwining his concepts of human animality, flourishing and virtues. This will reveal a new type of relationship between humans and nature, necessitating a fresh set of virtues that MacIntyre has yet to explore: the virtues of shared responsibility.

Social practices, narrative unity and tradition: MacIntyre's concept of virtues

Alasdair MacIntyre's virtue ethics seeks to explain the place that the virtues, understood in Aristotelian-Thomist sense, occupy in human life, placing them on the horizon of the social practices – the lives of individuals and communities – in a narrative perspective in which history, philosophy and sociology are intertwined in a search to explain morality and its specific character, as well as justify it rationally. Assume that, in *After Virtue* (2007), MacIntyre had not paid attention to human vulnerability and inability resulting from their animal nature and suppose that an ethics independent of biology would be possible in *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999). In that case, he resorts to Thomas Aquinas to explain the virtues that refer not only to the animal condition of the human being but also to the need to recognize the vulnerability and dependence that result from it[2].

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre's concept of virtues is fundamentally historical: he traces a genea-

[2] Helder B. A. de Carvalho observes that "this emphasis on human animality and the place of the virtues of dependence in the very constitution of the autonomous reasoning moral agent represents a novelty in relation to his previous work, altering and deepening the theoretical project established in *After Virtue*, while at the same time not being tied to in the webs of scientific naturalism, not reducing theoretical work in the moral sphere to an empirical description of certain data and behaviors" (CARVALHO, 2010, p. 167).

logical account of what he terms the "classical tradition" that commences with Homeric epic poetry, traverses through Athens and its poets and playwrights, through Plato and Aristotle, and even extends to medieval continuators like Thomas Aquinas. Furthermore, he is also dialectical: he narrates the transformations and progressive enrichments of this tradition, as well as the internal and external conflicts and epistemological crises. MacIntyre refers to as "classical tradition" the tradition after Aristotle that "always uses the Nicomachean Ethics and the Politics as key texts, when it can, but it never surrenders itself wholly to Aristotle. For it is a tradition which always sets itself in a relationship of dialogue with Aristotle, rather than in any relationship of simple assent" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 165).

MacIntyre's concept of virtues involves three interrelated stages:

> The first stage requires a background account of what I shall call a practice, the second an account of what I have already characterized as the narrative order of a single human life and the third an account a good deal fuller than I have given up to now of what constitutes a moral tradition (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 187).

Each later stage presupposes the earlier, and not vice versa, once earlier stage is both modified by and reinterpreted in the light of the others, also providing an essential constituent of each later stage. For MacIntyre, it is a particular type of practice that always prepares the arena where the virtues are exhibited, and these receive their definition, although primary and incomplete, insofar as the virtues are not exercised exclusively within the scope of the practices. Social practices are any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal 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[3] (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 187).

However, an explanation of virtues based only on practices is a partial and initial explanation. Restricting the concept of virtues to the scope of practices can lead to an excessively conflictual and arbitrary situation, a situation in which the pretensions of one practice are incompatible with those of another practice, in such a way that the individual begins to oscillate arbitrarily instead of making rational choices. To deepen his concept of virtues and, therefore, escape this arbitrary element in moral life, MacIntyre proposes that we incorporate a conception of the *telos* of an entire human life, conceived as a unity, in which there is an understanding of the goods and of the good that goes beyond the multiplicity of goods that inform practices (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 203).

What MacIntyre is proposing with this concept of virtue is a conception of a self-thought in a narrative way "whose unity resides in the unity of a narrative which links birth to life to death as narrative beginning to middle to end" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 205). For MacIntyre, every human action can only be understood as a narrative history that articulates the intentions, motives, passions and purposes of a human agent in a historical model.[4] Thus, "narrative history of a certain kind turns out to be the basic and essential genre for the characterization of human actions" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 208). The action itself has a fundamentally narrative characteristic: "It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 212).

According to MacIntyre, the pursuit of the good or exercising virtues are not individual endeavors. We are, in fact, heirs to a tradition that forms the basis of our private lives, our moral starting point,

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[3] For Kelvin Knight, MacIntyre's concept of practice is an eminently Aristotelian concept, since "to engage in a practice is to participate in the sharing not only of rules, but also of goods and, therefore, of reasons for action and – potentially, at least – of cooperative reasoning about action" (KNIGHT, 2008, p. 317).

[4] About this narrative perspective of MacIntyre, Francisco J. T. Díaz states that, "if narrating is justifying, the first justification of his moral points of view occurred in 1996 with *A Short History of Ethics*. This means that he already had a perspective of historical reading, he had already defined the core of his convictions" (DÍAZ, 2005, p. 155).

and contributes to our moral particularity. Our identity, what we are, is fundamentally shaped by a specific past that is present, to a certain extent, in our present. We are part of a history that, whether we acknowledge it or not, like it or not, is one of the pillars of a tradition. This leads to the conclusion that "the possession of an historical identity and the possession of a social identity coincide" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 221).

MacIntyre's concept of tradition is not a static entity passed down through generations, but a living entity with an internal dynamic. This dynamic is characterized by a conflict, a prominent element in its constitution.[5] Contrary to the derogatory connotation that the term tradition acquired during modernity, MacIntyre defines it as

> An argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretative debates through which the meaning and rationale of the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted (MACINTYRE, 1988, p. 12).

In this sense, "to appeal to tradition is to insist that we cannot adequately identify either our own commitments or those of others in the argumentative conflicts of the present except by situating them within those histories which made them what they have now become" (MACINTYRE, 1988, p. 13). This is because MacIntyre understands a tradition as a history of conflicts, as a narrative of the debates that led its formulation to its current stage, since "all reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional mode of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 222).

However, MacIntyre recognizes that his virtue ethics, as formulated in *After Virtue*, presents at least two interrelated limitations that prevent it from considering essential aspects of the role of virtues in human life: the supposed independence of ethics about biology and the lack of attention to human vulnerability and dependence resulting from our animality (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. *x*). These limitations will lead MacIntyre, in *Dependent Rational Animals*, to significantly correct pivotal aspects of his virtue ethics through a "philosophical anthropology", in which he seeks to recover, in other terms, Aristotle's metaphysical biology from Thomas Aquinas.

Flourishing, animality and human goods

In his philosophical anthropology, MacIntyre asserts that our bodies are animal bodies with the identity and continuity of animal bodies, although we often forget this; "although transcending some of the limitations of other intelligent animals, we never separate ourselves entirely from what we share with them" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 8). It is not just the fact that the human body is an animal body, with the identity and consistency of an animal body, but that "human identity is primarily, even if not only, bodily and therefore animal identity and it is by reference to that identity that the continuities of our relationships to others are partly defined" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 8). Even the process of language acquisition is based on more fundamental and primary interpretative knowledge prior to the use of language, which does not have and does not need to have an inferential justification.

What MacIntyre is suggesting is that adult human activities and beliefs are best understood as the development of modes of beliefs and activities that they share with some other species

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[5] Helder B. A. de Carvalho notes that with the advent of modernity and its culture of enlightenment, the term *tradition* acquired a negative connotation, being used as synonym for antique, old positions, and, most importantly, as an opposition between tradition and reason. Furthermore, tradition came to mean denial of changes, thus representing an obstacle to the progress of men, to their consciousness and to their knowledge. [...] However, this negative evaluation and reception of tradition has not been entirely successful. Today, an increasing number of authors are abandoning this historically marked prejudiced stance and turning to historical traditions as a source of inspiration, renewal and maturation of the philosophical reflection in the face of emerging problems. [...] With his concept of tradition of rational research, MacIntyre seeks to forge a model of rationality, in opposition to the Enlightenment model, that does not deny the Gadamerian conquest of traditions as an epistemological constitutive and reaffirms the historical condition of both practical life and the life of the human spirit , but without falling into a relativism that denies the existence of truths or that affirms the validity of any ethical propositions (CARVALHO, 2011, p. 66-67).

of intelligent animals and that such beliefs and activities of members of those species need to be understood as, in important aspects, "approaching the condition of language-users" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 41). MacIntyre then proposes a type of realistic naturalism, in which the human being is understood as a rational animal with a body and as a social and mutually dependent animal so that our actions, like our bodies, have animal antecedents that inform our ethical behavior (KNIGHT, 2008, p. 326-327).

From this point of view, some reasons humans need the virtues are shared with other animal species, which also have prelinguistic reasons for action that extend beyond nutrition and reproduction. This occurs because some of these "mere animals" are already guided by a form of practical reasoning that manifests itself by the fact that assuming *this* is a reason to do *that*: "a kind of reasoning that is characterized by *analogy* with human understanding, that some of the prelinguistic conditions necessary for the development of human rationality are satisfied" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 60).

Therefore, MacIntyre argues, to acknowledge that there are these animal preconditions for human rationality requires us to think of the relationship of human beings to members of other intelligent species not in terms of a single dividing line between "them" and "us", but in a scale perspective in which, at one end of this scale, there are types of animals for whom sensory perception is nothing more than the reception of information without conceptual content. At the other extreme there are animals whose perceptions are, in part, the result of the intentional and attentive investigation and whose behaviors change to adjust according to the true and the false (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 57). There is no doubt that human beings have a superior place on this scale and that they are distinguished from other animals not only by their use of language, but also by their ability to use it in specific cases. However, this does not eliminate what we share with other animal species, "not only with respect to the animality of the body, but also with respect to forms of life" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 58).

For MacIntyre, the ability to flourish is not an exclusively human characteristic: "flourishing is a concept also applicable to members of different species of animals and plants" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 64). Every species has a natural end, and to explain the movements of and changes in an individual is to explain how that individual moves toward the end appropriate to members of that particular species. The ends to which they conceive men as members of such a species move as goods, and their movement towards or away from various goods are to be explained concerning the virtues and vices they have learned or failed to learn and the forms of practical reasoning they employ. (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 81-82). Human beings, as well as members of all other species, have a specific nature, and that nature is such that they have particular aims and goals, so that they move by nature towards a specific *telos*. The *telos* of a person's life – their activity – is, therefore, their flourishing.

MacIntyre's concept of flourishing is a matter of fact and, as such, it can be explored through the lens of various scientific fields. The realms of biology and ecology, in particular, have shed light on certain fundamental themes that are crucial for formulating comprehensive explanations. These include the distinction between environments that foster the flourishing of some species and those that do not, as well as the differentiation within a population between individuals or groups that flourish and those that do not. MacIntyre's approach, as he puts it, involves "identifying the various characteristics that an individual or population of some particular species needs in order to flourish in this or that particular environment, at this or that particular stage of development" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 65). Human flourishing, like that of any other species, has an objective dimension. Based on empirical facts, it is possible to determine MacIntyre's conditions for the flourishing of a given species. This extends beyond MacIntyre's argumentation, suggesting that, as biologically constituted animals, there is a dimension of human life that develops or

not, depending on the type of vulnerabilities and afflictions that its individual particularity and context impose on it, regardless of our subjective or intersubjective assessments. The requirements for human flourishing, in this context, the necessary requirements for human flourishing to occur are determined by the physical and intellectual dispositions of each individual and by the material and environmental conditions that this individual has to cultivate and maintain their body fully healthy in all its aspects.

In this sense, knowing what flourishing consists of requires a conceptual and evaluative investigation, as flourishing always means flourishing by having such and such a set of characteristics, that is, "the concept of flourishing in this respect resembles other concepts that involve applications of the more fundamental concept of good ('to flourish' translates *eu zen* and *bene vivere*)"[6] (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 65). MacIntyre considers that there are at least three different ways of attributing the good:

> 1. As a means to achieve another good that is a good in itself.
>
> 2. Due to a socially established activity or practice.
>
> 3. As a member of the human species.

The judgment about what is best for the life of an individual or community – the best way to order their goods –, not only as an agent who participates in one or another activity in one or another community, but also as a human being, illustrates the third way of attributing the good[7].

Resorting to wristwatch's example, MacIntyre proposes a functional concept of good: a wristwatch, in its definition and evaluation by the agent, is inseparable from a "good wristwatch", since the criterion of something being a "wristwatch" and the criterion of something being "a good wristwatch" are not independent of each other. The concept of "wristwatch" cannot be separated from the concept of "good wristwatch", which implicitly involves a function that the agent uses to say whether such a wristwatch is good or bad. In this way, although he does not provide a definitive conception, his concept of good, recognizes the Aristotelian-Thomist heritage: good comes to be those which perfect or suit a nature and, therefore, its end, that which it tends to. MacIntyre therefore inherits his concept of good from a scheme common to Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, according to which, a natural form implies or includes the function proper to the being that possesses it, a function whose realization is its true good, good which guides and is acquired through the virtues.[8]

For MacIntyre, during this search for the realization of his *telos*, the individual craves at least two types of goods: individual goods (what is best for his life here and now) and the common good (what is best for human being as such). Despite differentiating them, MacIntyre recognizes that it is not possible to seek the individual good without also seeking the good of all those who participate in these relationships: "For we cannot have a practically adequate understanding of our own good, of our own flourishing, apart from and independently of the flourishing of that whole set of social relationships in which we have found our place" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 107-108).

For an individual to flourish, his life must be organized in such a way that he can participate successfully in the activities of an independent practical reasoner and, in turn, receive and have a reasonable expectation of receiving the care and necessary attention, resulting from the situation of vulnerability and afflictions that his animal condition imposes on him. It means that we achieve our own good only if and insofar as others make

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[6] For David Izquierdo, "although MacIntyre does not speak of *eudaimonia*, it is undoubted that his concept of *flourishing* takes on the structure of the Aristotelian theory of happiness" (IZQUIERDO, 2007, p. 76).

[7] For David Izquierdo, in fact, the underlying unity of meaning that these interpretations of *good* hold is such that it is more appropriate to speak only of a single interpretation of good: the flourishing. According to him, the good, in the first sense, is no more than a means (whether internal or external) and, in the second, it would become an internal means of flourishing, so that the nature of the good of practice comes from its orientation towards the flourishing of the person (IZQUIERDO, 2007, p. 111-112).

[8] This is the thesis supported by Michael Fuller, according to which MacIntyre would inherit his concept of good from what he calls the "form-function-virtue scheme", a standard scheme in Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas (FULLER, 1998, p. 5).

that good their own, helping us during periods of deficiency to become – through the acquisition and exercise of the virtues – the kind of human being who does of the good of others our good, and this is not because we calculate that only if we help others will they help us (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 108).

MacIntyre emphasizes, however, that this does not mean that the individual good is subordinate to the good of the community or vice versa. Although the pursuit of the community's common good is an essential element of their individual good, the good of each particular individual is more than the common good for all those able to contribute to it. And there are, of course, other common goods than the goods of the global community: the goods of the family and other groups, the goods of various practices. Thus, "each individual as an independent practical reasoner has to answer the question of what place it is best that each of those goods should have in her or his life" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 109).

Furthermore, although MacIntyre does not mention it, full human flourishing also implies the existence of a third type of good to be aimed at. As biologically constituted animals, human flourishing involves an objective dimension whose development depends on the vulnerability and dangers that individual particularity and context impose on it, regardless of our subjective or intersubjective assessments. In this sense, there are goods whose importance is not reduced to the human projects, whether individual or collective. For an individual to flourish, in addition to the goods mentioned above, typical of a social animal such as us, their body must have the primary nutrition and health conditions. For this, it is indispensable, for example, food security, potable water, fertile and uncontaminated soils, and clean air.

This type of bodily need exposes a different form of vulnerability and dependence not thematized by MacIntyre and, consequently, a different set of goods to be considered. Given our animal condition, we are dependent not only on the remaining human beings, but also on the natural environment in which we are inserted because for the nutrition and growth of an individual or biological species to occur satisfactorily, its natural habitat must offer full conditions for this. Without adequate natural resources, the human being, like any other living being, is subject to a series of afflictions that seriously compromise its flourishing process, to the point of putting their own life at risk. Full human flourishing, therefore, implies considering nature[9], to some extent, as a type of good constitutive of this flourishing.

Full human flourishing hence implies the existence of at least three types of goods: individual goods, common goods and natural goods. Although each of these goods has its importance in each individual's life, within a specific community or even for the human species in general, they are interdependent because for one aspect of human life to flourish fully, all other aspects also need to flourish. In this sense, the search for the human good involves a relationship of learning and mutual exchange between the individual, their social context and the natural environment in which they are inserted, both regarding the good to be achieved and the procedures to be adopted. During the immersion in these social relations, the individual progressively expands their subjective conception of good, integrating it with more comprehensive conceptions of human good, and perceiving themselves not only as a particular individual but also as a social, biologically constituted being and environmentally dependent.

The virtues of independence, acknowledged dependence and shared responsibility: towards a three-dimensional virtue ethics

If the human good comprises these three dimensions of human life, an ethics of virtues that

[9] To avoid going into the long and complex philosophical debate about its meaning, I adopt of "nature" as presented by Paul W. Taylon in his work *Respect for Nature* (2011). In this context, "nature" refers to the "set of natural ecosystems of our planet, along with the populations of animals and plants that make up the biotic communities of these ecosystems" (TAYLON, 2011, p. 3).

intends to account for the complex relationship between them must also have a three-dimensional structure corresponding to each type of good. If flourishing always means flourishing through the possession of a particular set of characteristics, each type of good implies the existence of a different set of corresponding virtues, whose personal motivation, social context and natural surroundings will determine the conditions for human flourishing to occur, as well as informing the appropriate virtues so that the specific good of each dimension of human life is achieved, without losing sight of the human good as such. On this basis, although MacIntyre's "naturalist turn" may provoke an initial movement to expand his virtue ethics, including the virtues of acknowledged dependence as the necessary counterpart to the virtues of independence, with the recognition of the natural dimension of the good as constitutive of human flourishing, a third set of virtues is still necessary: the virtues of shared responsibility.

To better understand this movement towards expanding virtue ethics, I will briefly explain the typology of virtues presented by MacIntyre, and then I will deal with the virtues of shared responsibility and how they relate to the other virtues. It is worth noting that even if MacIntyre presents a classification of virtues, he needs to provide a detailed list of those that he considers relevant and, consequently, organize hierarchically the virtues thematized throughout his description of the classical tradition of virtues. In this context, the typology of virtues that I will expose below, especially those belonging to what he classifies as virtues of independence, accompanies his analysis of the various authors who make up the classical tradition of virtues he described.

The virtues of independence are those enumerated by Aristotle and other later authors of the classical tradition that MacIntyre analyzes; they are virtues that allow us to move from a condition of dependence to the condition of independent practical reasoners. Despite considering several theories of virtues prior to Aristotle, notably those of Homer, Sophocles, the sophists and Plato, MacIntyre qualifies the Aristotelian theory of virtues as one that decisively constitutes the classical tradition as a tradition of moral thought, firmly establishing a large part of what their poetic predecessors only managed to affirm or insinuate and transforming the classical tradition into a rational tradition.

The exercise of virtues requires "a capacity to judge and to do the right thing in the right place at the right time in the right way" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 150), not only in the Aristotelian schema, but also in MacIntyre, the *phronesis* is the primary virtue in the practical field, because, although it is an intellectual virtue, "but it is that intellectual virtue without which none of the virtues of character can be exercised" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 154). *Phronesis* is precisely the virtue that makes the agent capable of exercising judgment in specific cases, that is, of judging according to right reason: "the *phronimos* is able to judge both which truths are relevant to him in his particular situation and from that judgment and from his perception of the relevant aspects of himself and his situation to act rightly" (MACINTYRE, 1988, p. 115-116).

In addition to *phronesis*, justice is another virtue that appears on MacIntyre's list. For MacIntyre, as for Aristotle, we become just, "by first performing just acts, acts which *ex hypothesi* are not yet expressions of the character trait of justice and which we cannot ourselves as yet rationally justify" (MACINTYRE, 1988, p. 113). We have to learn from those others who already possess the moral education we lack that acts must be performed as just ones and that distribution rules must be observed. Moreover, when circumstances are and are not thus relevant, we will learn how to move from more straightforward judgment to more complex cases (MACINTYRE, 1988, p. 114).

Besides *phronesis* and justice, another virtue listed by MacIntyre is friendship. As in Aristotle, MacIntyre recognizes that the norms of justice govern those who, in some way, are also and more fundamentally linked to each other by bonds of friendship since "justice by itself is insufficient as a bond" (MACINTYRE, 1988, p. 122). The type of friendship Aristotle advocated expresses a common recognition and the search for a shared com-

mon good. MacIntyre considers this participation "essential and primary to the constitution of any form of community, whether that of a household or that of a city" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 155).

MacIntyre also mentions some auxiliary virtues, such as charity and courage. The virtue of charity arises in the context of MacIntyre's attempt to understand the relationship between the morality of virtues and that of laws, more specifically regarding the gaps in the relationships necessary for the cultivation of a community constituted by the shared project of achieving the common good – the offenses to be prosecuted under the laws of such community. MacIntyre observes that, although it was through punishment that human societies reacted to such types of action, in biblical culture, unlike that of Aristotle, an alternative became available: forgiveness. (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 174).

The virtue of courage, in turn, is related to care and interest because "if someone says that he cares for some individual, community or cause, but is unwilling to risk harm or danger on his, her or its own behalf, he puts in question the genuineness of his care and concern." (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 192). For MacIntyre, this does not mean that a coward has no interest, but only that "a man who genuinely cares and has not the capacity for risking harm or danger has to define himself, both to himself and to others, as a coward" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 192).

However, MacIntyre considerably expands his list of virtues by including novelist Jane Austen in his narrative. According to him, "It is her uniting of Christian and Aristotelian themes in a determinate social context that makes lane Austen the last great effective imaginative voice of the tradition of thought about, and practice of, the virtues which I have tried to identify" (MACINTYRE, 2007, p. 240). His catalog of virtues will then include virtues such as self-knowledge (Christian and non-Socratic), constancy, patience, and courage as the virtues necessary to sustain the kinds of political communities in which men and women can seek the good together.

With the inclusion of the theme of human animality and its moral implications, MacIntyre adds a second set of virtues to the virtues of independence: the virtues of acknowledged dependence, which are the necessary counterpart of the first. Given our initial animal condition, "we find ourselves placed at some particular point within a network of relationships of giving and receiving in which, generally and characteristically, what and how far we are able to give depends in pan on what and how far we received" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 99). If virtues enable human beings to become independent practical reasoners, they also allow them to participate in these reciprocal relationships through which they will pursue their ends as a practical reasoner.

The main virtue of reciprocal relationships is that they have aspects of both generosity and justice: just generosity. As an example of the recognition of this virtue, MacIntyre cites the expression "wancantognaka" in Lakota culture[10], which names individuals who recognize their responsibilities to their immediate family, extended family and tribe, and who express this recognition through their participation in uncalculated ceremonial acts of reciprocity, ceremonies of giving, remembrance and homage: "'Wancantognaka' names a generosity that I owe to all those others who also owe it to me" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 120). However, MacIntyre states that the recognition of just generosity is not exclusive to Lakota. This same virtue is described by Thomas Aquinas when he discusses the relationship between liberality, justice, *decentia*, *beneficentia* and compassion. In these cases, what the virtues require of us are characteristic types of action that are, at the same time, just and generous, beneficial and made with compassion (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 121).

To sustain these relationships of uncalculated giving and respectful receiving, an education in the dispositions that make such actions possible is necessary. Acting towards others in the way that the virtue of just generosity requires is acting from a loving and attentive perspective towards that other. "Just generosity then requires us to

[10] For an introduction to Lakota tradition, see Nicholas, Jeffery. L. Mitakuye Oyasun as a Foundation for the well-being of animal life:

act from and with a certain kind of affectionate regard. When we are so required, not to act from inclination is always a sign of moral inadequacy, of a failure to act as our duty requires" (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 122).

The virtue of just generosity is manifested, therefore, in relationships that have three characteristics: they are communal relationships that involve our affections; extend beyond hospitality relations to foreigners passing through; and, through *misericordia*, these relationships include those whose urgent needs are brought before the members of such a community (MACINTYRE, 1999, p. 126). With this, MacIntyre then concludes his typology of virtues and the role that each of them occupies in human life, paying attention to human vulnerability and fragility resulting from its animal identity and the bonds of dependence necessary for maintaining a life in common.

However, as a result of our condition as biologically constituted animals, we still have a third type of need – or perhaps an aspect of the bodily needs for nutrition and growth – not discussed by MacIntyre. For an individual to flourish, their body must have the primary conditions for nutrition and growth; for this, it is essential to have food security, drinking water, fertile and uncontaminated soils, and clean air. Without these fundamental conditions, we run the risk of being seriously harmed in our physical and intellectual development process, as is the case today in many regions of the planet that suffer from water and food shortages, such as southern and eastern Asia, the Middle East, North and Central Africa and some regions of Central and South America[11]. Thus, to specifically account for this type of broad vulnerability and the type of good it implies, a third set of virtues not mentioned by MacIntyre is required: the virtues of shared responsibility[12].

The virtues of shared responsibility are related to the delicate task of establishing a new relationship between human beings and nature, in which we are responsible for ourselves and the different forms of life with which we share the same destiny due to the power we hold over them. We are part of a larger and interdependent living community and, as a result, any change that occurs in that community affects not only that particular individual or species directly involved but all of its members[13]. Consequently, we also share the same common destiny of all life forms that inhabit the planet with us, as well as being responsible to each other and to this noteworthy living community of which we are part. Because we are biological beings whose survival and proper functioning depend on access to certain essential natural goods, such as food, drinking water and oxygen, whose lack of exposes us, as well as any other living being, to a situation of extreme risk, nature acquires an intrinsic moral value[14].

For Hans Jonas (1984), this intrinsic moral value of nature can be perceived by the interest it manifests in organic life, through the extraordinary variety of its forms, each constituting a way of being and of effort at the price of frustration and extinction. In this sense, all sensitive and impulse-driven beings are not only an end of nature but an end in themselves, that is, their own end (JONAS, 1984). Nature then constitutes an end in itself, whether for reasons of *use*, reasons of *necessity* and reasons of *merit*[15], not requiring any

reason, nature and oppression in Horkheimer, MacIntyre and Midgley. *Pensando*, v. 6, n. 11, p. 31-48, 2015.

[11] For an overview of the impacts of diminishing water and food resources, see the report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Water Council (WCC): *Towards a Water and Food Secure Future: Critical Perspectives for Policy-makers*. Rome and Marseille: FAO, 2015.

[12] For a detailed analysis of the virtues of shared responsibility are and their relationship with other virtues, see José Elielton de Sousa in *As virtudes da responsabilidade compartilhada* (*The virtues of shared responsibility*, free translation). Curitiba, PR: CRV, 2017.

[13] This idea that we are part of a broader and interdependent living community has been defended contemporaneously by thinkers such as Aldo Leopold (1966), James Lovelock (1979), Paul W. Taylon (2011), J. M. García Gómes-Heras (2000), as well as documents from international political-religious organizations such as the *Carta da Terra* (UNESCO, 2000) and the *Carta Encíclica Laudato Si –Sobre o cuidado da casa comum* (POPE FRANCIS, 2015).

[14] As stated by Gomes-Heras (2000), the networks of mathematical formulas, typical of the deterministic nature model of modern physical-mathematical sciences, encounter severe difficulties in fitting the complex phenomenon of life, of which ecology and biology make us aware. It is precisely here, in the phenomenon of life, where those values are preferentially established, those values that make nature worthy, recipient of respect and a 'sui generis' subject of rights.

[15] This tripartite structure for justifying the foundations of respect and preservation of nature was elaborated by Martir H. Krieger in his seminal article "What's wrong with Plastic Trees?". Science, v. 179, p. 446-453, 1973.

other justification.

To a large extent, we owe this "ecological turn" in contemporary thought to Aldo Leopold (1966), who reestablished a moral relationship with nature. When analyzing the successive stages of ethical reflection throughout history, Aldo Leopold finds that there is no ethics that deals with the relationship between human beings and the land and the animals and plants that populate it: "The relationship with the land is strictly economic: supposes privileges, but not obligations" (LEOPOLD, 1966, 238). Based on this observation, Leopold then proposes a "land ethic" to expand the community to include soil, water, plants and animals, or collectively, the land. (LEOPOLD, 1966, p. 239).

Certainly, Aldo Leopold was not the only one to contemporaneously project an evolutionary and ecological worldview, but he has the merit of designing for his later life the basis for a model of environmental ethics whose notions of dignity, respect and moral responsibility for nature are central elements. Today we have several strategies that allow us to restore the dignity of nature and, consequently, recognize its values and rights. Biocentrism (Schweitzer), by proclaiming life as the supreme value, becomes a source, an obligation and foundation of moral duty; Deep Ecology (in addition to Aldo Leopold, A. Naess, J. Lovelock, L. Boff), by resurrecting the mystique of nature understood as a living organism in development, according to vital laws and principles immanent to itself; the multiple efforts to expand the field of moral relevance (ability to feel: P. Singer; interests: J. Feinbenrg, R. Attfield; inherent values: T. Regan), recognize that although the natural qualities of things are not moral values, they can be converted through the exercise of reason and free decision-making by human beings.

On this account, this ethical relationship between human flourishing and nature informs the constitutive dispositions of the virtues of shared responsibility. In a broad sense, the virtues of shared responsibility do not represent a philosophical novelty. They can be found, with due proportions, in classic authors such as Plato and his work *Republic* (1992), Aristotle and his *Nicomachean Ethics* (2014), or even in contemporary authors such as Arendt in her *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (2006) and the short essay *Collective Responsibility* (2009) and Hans Jonas and his *The Responsibility Principle* (1984). However, we use the term "virtues of shared responsibility" to designate what Ronald Sandler (2007) calls "environmental virtues", that is, a set of dispositions that involve both our responsibility towards environmental entities – ecosystems, species, beings, qualities, relationships –, how they justify considerations about these entities and promote or maintain environmental goods or values related to them (SANDLER, 2007, p. 42-43).

Furthermore, we use it mainly to designate the role of human co-author in natural evolutionary processes. To the extent that nature presents itself as an open work, in a constant transformation process, human beings, through their praxis, become participants in this natural process, self-determining themselves and their surroundings. In this regard, we play an important role in the complex relationships that nature establishes with its constituent parts, acting and intentionally and partially outlining which paths to follow, that is, we share individually and collectively with nature itself the responsibility for what it becomes. The virtues of shared responsibility are, then, a set of character traits, attitudes and dispositions to act that recognize our role of co-responsibility towards nature.

Among the virtues we can mention as belonging to the virtues of shared responsibility, responsibility is understood broadly, which includes not only humans but also the community of the earth, as mentioned above, is the primary virtue. Understanding responsibility as a virtue backtracks to the Greek world, whose definition of the conditions for responsible action acquired its first formulations[16]. Although it is found in an embryonic form in Homeric poems and in some

[16] According to Mirian Campolina Diniz Peixoto, "the problem of the moral responsibility, at the time of its emergence in Greek antiquity, falls within the framework of the affirmation of human nature as an open space, and of man as a free being capable of *autopoiesis*

ancient philosophers, it is Aristotle who explicitly formulates this idea of human responsibility: man [is] a motor principle and father of his actions as he is of his children (ARISTOTLE, 2014).

In the contemporary context of environmental risks arising from the expansion of the scope of human action, Hans Jonas proposes thinking of responsibility more appropriately as a correlate of power, with the dimension and modality of power determining the dimension and modality of responsibility (JONAS, 1984). The greater the power and its exercise, not only the magnitude, the greater the qualitative nature of responsibility changes, as the deeds of power generate the content of responsibility, which is essentially a response to what happens.

The shared sense of responsibility is related to this expansion of human's power to act and the common destiny that we share with the remaining human beings. If we accept the definition of responsibility mentioned above by Jonas and understand it as a correlate of our power to interfere in nature on a planetary level, then responsibility is a shared moral virtue. Shared responsibility is configured as a firm willingness to respond and manage well the various obligations derived from this global power of human intervention and the risks it poses to life on earth to the extent that this power of interference is the result of collective choices and practices and its logic and use also obey the collective demands.

In this respect, the virtues of shared responsibility initially follow the same itinerary as the typology of virtues presented by MacIntyre. As their acquisition depends on exercise and experience, it is social practices, as MacIntyre understands them, that provide the initial context in which such virtues develop. Within these practices, the individual begins to realize their dependence on a series of natural resources essential for their full flourishing and recognizes nature as a critical constitutive of this flourishing and its preservation as one of the ends of the various practices humans can relate to.

The relationships of reciprocity that characterize human life play a pivotal role in shaping the virtues of shared responsibility. They explain the need to learn about the virtues of responsibility and care for others, not only for those close to us but also strangers and, mainly, those who suffer some type of serious and permanent needs. This initial learning provided by reciprocal relationships allows us to understand, by analogy, the gradual extension of our responsibility and care towards those others who are yet to come, the future generations, as well as the need to preserve the environmental conditions necessary for these "others" in the future to develop properly. It is this initial learning provided by reciprocal relationships that allows us to understand by analogy the gradual extension of our responsibility and care also towards those others who are yet to come, the future generations, as well as the need to preserve the environmental conditions necessary for these "others" in the future can develop properly.

However, the type of social relationship that involves the virtues of shared responsibility requires something that surpasses what is required in reciprocity relationships, as the type of responsibility and care they demand goes beyond the human scope and extends to other forms of life with which we interact. Regarding this and, in addition to responsibility and care, another vital virtue is what we can call "ecological sensitivity", that is, an affective disposition to perceive the nuances and small signals that nature emits when we interact with it, interfering in their symbiotic processes.

In fact, the virtues of shared responsibility are, in a certain sense, a necessary condition for the cultivation of other types of virtues, as our capacity for reflection and action can only be assured thanks to adequate physical and environmental conditions that, for the most part, derive fundamentally from a healthy natural environment. If cultivating a virtue involves our ability to feel,

and *physiopoiesis*. Such capacity, in turn, develops thanks to the exercise of discernment, which gives man the power to establish, for himself and for the world around him, the balance, for which each and every one finds in themselves the means to exercise the creative action of their own existence" (PEIXOTO, 2002, p. 322).

think and act in a certain way and such ability is only possible due to the biological conditions that sustain the person as a living being, then a healthy natural environment is a precondition for cultivating any virtue. Faced with the threats to life in general and to human life in particular caused by the Anthropocene crisis, without the virtues of shared responsibility, the other virtues run the risk of disappearing and not being realized, relegating us to the condition of mere animals guided only by the most basic survival instincts.

Conclusion

As we have seen, Alasdair MacIntyre proposed an ethics of virtues anchored, on the one hand, in human historicity and its diverse social practices, and, on the other, in our animality, together with the vulnerability and dependence to which we are subjected, as biologically constituted animals. However, when thematizing the relationship between human animality, flourishing and virtues in a naturalistic perspective, adding to the virtues of independence, their necessary counterpart – the Virtues of Acknowledged Dependence – MacIntyre still seems to limit himself to *anthropos*, as he does not thematize the risks of the Anthropocene crisis for biologically constituted beings such as humans.

In this sense, seek to expand MacIntyre's virtue ethics through the intertwining of his concepts of human animality, flourishing and virtues, which expose a type of relationship between human beings and nature that requires an entirely new and different set of virtues than those hitherto thematized by him: the virtues of shared responsibility. Including this third set of virtues in MacIntyre's theory of virtues allows us to endorse a proposal for virtue ethics firmly anchored in the historicity and plurality of human practices but which also recognizes our animality.

Full human flourishing, thus, implies the recognition of our dependence not only on other human beings, as MacIntyre had pointed out, but also on nature and the natural goods that it makes available to us; inadequate access to such natural goods necessary for the nutrition and growth process, typical of a biologically constituted animal, can jeopardize satisfactory flourishing.

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José Elielton de Sousa

Doutor em Filosofia (2016) pela Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (PUCRS), Mestre em Filosofia (2010) e Graduado em Filosofia (2007) pela Universidade Federal do Piauí (UFPI). Professor Adjunto da Universidade Federal do Piauí (UFPI), atuando na Graduação em Filosofia e no Programa de Pós-Graduação em Filosofia (PPGFIL). Tem experiência e interesse em Filosofia Contemporânea, com ênfase em Ética, atuando principalmente nos seguintes autores e temas: Friedrich Nietzsche, Alasdair MacIntyre, Crítica à modernidade, Niilismo, Ética das Virtudes, Vitalismo, Filosofia e Educação, Pensamento Filosófico Brasileiro.

Endereço para correspondência

Rua Des. Francisco Pires de Castro, 3800, 105A

Aeroporto, 64003-705

Teresina, PI, Brasil

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