
II. ASPIRATION CORNER

Modern Views on Virtue Ethics

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Abstract: This paper analyzes some influential ideas in virtue ethics. Alasdair MacIntyre, in his work *After Virtue*, and Elizabeth Anscombe, in his controversial essay “Modern Moral Philosophy”, brought fresh ideas into moral philosophy of their time changing views on contemporary morality. They strongly influenced moral philosophers who then followed their ideas. The two philosophers criticized contemporary moral philosophies such as emotivism, utilitarianism, deontology. Elizabeth Anscombe criticized also the use of the concepts of duty and moral obligation in the absence of God as the context God had no place. For solving the quests of modern morality, both MacIntyre and Anscombe proposed that the only solution was the returning to ancient Aristotelian virtues.

Key words: virtue ethics, moral philosophy, utilitarianism, moral obligation, Aristotelian virtues.

1. G.E.M. Anscombe and Modern Moral Philosophy

The British philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe is one of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century and the disciple of Ludwig Wittgenstein, both of them being known for their profound analytical knowledge. Her writings in ethics and moral philosophy were extremely influential, Elizabeth Anscombe being one of the first philosophers formulating the contemporary theory of action (subdomain of philosophy which analyzes the ultimate nature of reality). Her essay, “Modern Moral Philosophy”, had a lasting impact on ethics with a significant contribution to the revival of the school of philosophy called virtue ethics influencing also the philosophical thinking in the field of moral philosophy. Among the philosophers influenced by Anscombe’s ideas are the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, in his work, *After Virtue*, Philippa Foot, in her work, *Virtues and Vices*, and Rosalind Hursthouse,

in her work *About Virtue Ethics*, in which the philosopher contends that the virtue ethics can produce v-rules, that is rules centered on virtues and vices.¹

Writing after the World War II, Elizabeth Anscombe criticized the consequentialist morality prevailing at that time challenging the foundations of moral philosophy themselves and the research in the field of ethics of that time. The philosopher argues that there is no sense in moral philosophy as long as important concepts such as obligation, justice and virtue are not sufficiently analyzed and well understood pointing to the contemporary moral philosophy about which she claims that it uses these notions without a clear meaning. In her work, “Modern Moral Philosophy”, Elizabeth Anscombe approaches the importance of acting ethically, the value of ethics in philosophy and concepts such as the moral obligation (an imperative over the individual to do or to refrain from doing something) in a society becoming more and more secularized.

1.1. The Main Themes in Modern Moral Philosophy

In Elizabeth Anscombe’s essay, “Modern Moral Philosophy”, there are three main themes: concepts of moral obligation which became irrelevant in a secular society, the critics of the contemporary British philosophers, the majority of them being consequentialists (judged the moral value of an action according to its consequences and according to utilitarian principles) concluding that without a philosophy adequate to psychology, moral philosophy becomes a sterile study².

Elizabeth Anscombe invented the term “consequentialism” in order to describe a philosophical perspective according to which a moral judgment concerning an action can be done by its predictable consequences and objects regarding this perspective by Kant’s ethics according to which an action is moral if and only if it can be done in the frame of a universal law. Elizabeth Anscombe formulated new ideas which were to become a new branch in ethics: *virtue ethics*.

Getting a Catholic education, the British philosopher posed some

¹ Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001), pp.36-42

² G.E.M. Anscombe, “Modern Moral Philosophy,” in *Philosophy* 33, no.124, 1958, p.1.

ideas from the Christian tradition which could produce moral laws including the obligation and the duty, and the distinction between actions which are morally correct from those which are morally wrong. Having a firm faith in God, the British philosopher does not dispute the divine power but contends that a secular society cannot use the language of Christian ethics anymore. The word “ought to”, for example, or related notions such as “moral obligation” (things we are obliged to do on the basis of their morality) cannot be used anymore as the secular societies through their own nature are departed from God. “Ought to” denotes the command of a moral authority that used to be God, but in a secular society, God is not anymore the voice of the authority commanding how we should behave. Therefore, according to Elizabeth Anscombe, without any connection with God, such words lost their former meaning.

A second theme of the essay is that it is impossible to make difference between the British moral philosophers of the last 75 years, lacking any authentic debate in moral philosophy of the time, all of them being adepts of consequentialism in opposition to Christian morality which had dominated Europe for almost 2000 years and according to which certain actions were immoral regardless their consequences. The solution suggested by Elizabeth Anscombe was that moral philosophy needed an alternative model based on psychology, contending that excluding God, there cannot exist any interpretation of what is morally correct or wrong and ethics cannot be based on the divine commandments in this case. Instead of the divine commandments, the British philosopher proposed the return to the secular concepts of practical reason, virtue and justice derived from Aristotle’s works. This way, an action instead of being morally wrong could be seen as unjust.

1.2. The Critics of Contemporary Moral Philosophies

Virtue ethics is an approach to ethics which defines the good life in terms of acting and being obtained according to virtues like justice, wisdom, generosity. Consequentialism is a perspective according to which an action is morally relevant only in terms of its predictable consequences and, in certain situations, any rules of behavior can be broken. “Modern Moral Philosophy” is an attack on consequentialism which was derived from utilitarianism and on the ethics derived from the work of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, which Elizabeth Anscombe describes as immoral or, simple, incoherent, considering that a wider

and universal morality would not depend on the fluctuation of the decisions of a majority. In the contemporary world, accustomed with the challenge of death of civilians in international open conflicts in the name of a higher good, the British philosopher offered a radical alternative putting the accent on justice, wisdom, and the temperance of actions rather than on their consequences.

The author of “Modern Moral Philosophy” took into account four approaches of the moral philosophy: consequentialism which focused on the consequences of an action only, Kant’s ethics focused on the individual determination concerning the moral norms and rules to adopt, duty being at the basis of any moral action, the ethics of the divine commandments focused on the submission to God’s Law representing an approach of the Christian morality, and virtue ethics, the moral perspective of the ancient Greece, focused on understanding and developing the virtues, considering that the target of ethics was the development and the practice of the virtues defined as dispositions of character expressed in human actions, such as wisdom, temperance, courage, justice, prudence. Elizabeth Anscombe analyzed and criticized the main philosophies of the ‘50s; she considered consequentialism to be profoundly morally problematic and she proposed its replacement with a return to the Aristotelian approach of ethics supported by psychology.

Consequentialism, usually known as utilitarianism, was developed by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham who, in his work, *An Introduction to Moral Principles and Law* (1789), sustained that “pleasure and pain are the two masters of humanity/ mankind in competition who govern us in all that we do, in all that we say and in all that we think.”³ Bentham also suggested a way to calculate the morality of an action according to the pleasure produced by that action or to prevented or reduced pain. Bentham’s student, Stuart Mill, developed this theory even more in his influential book, *Utilitarianism* (1861).

According to Kant, the individual produces moral norms for himself based on that which any rational person would do in a given situation (the categorical imperative). For example, a rational person never chooses to lie, because if he lies in order to cheat somebody then implic-

³ Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to Moral Principles and Law*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1907).

itly he supports others to lie to him when it is in their financial advantage. This way, the capacity to distinguish between truth and false would be lost and people would live in a world which no rational thinker would choose.

Aristotle sustained that a good life characterized by *eudaimonia* (happiness or blessing) is the supreme good for the human being and it can be obtained through cultivating the virtues such as courage, honesty, justice, prudence, wisdom, temperance, compassion. But virtue ethics was not conceived on being good as a mental state, but on doing the good (doing good actions), this being the key of Aristotle's belief in the virtuous activity.⁴

1.3. The Return to Aristotle's Ethics of Virtues

In her essay, "Modern Moral Philosophy", Elizabeth Anscombe contrasted all the forms of the moral philosophy with Aristotle's view and then she suggested giving coherence to moral philosophy by invigorating the notion of virtue, sustaining that "After all, it is possible to advance towards the consideration of a concept of virtue with which I suppose we should begin the study of ethics."⁵ The main research in "Modern Moral Philosophy" refers to the nature and meaning of the *moral obligation*. The author rose the question in a challenging and unique mode showing that moral obligation and moral necessity had no meaning in philosophical discourse of her time. She argued that the term of moral obligation was remnant from the Christian belief in which the divine authority was that who gave the laws; God being the supreme authority, power and wisdom, the Creator of the moral obligations, we should behave according to his commandments. Consequentialists did not believe in God, or, even if they believed, however, they did not believe that the divine authority created moral obligations, but they used the Christian concept of moral obligation without explaining its meaning. Elizabeth Anscombe suggested that the moral philosophers should have given up using the terms they took from Christian morality (a sys-

⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, (Cambridge, ed. Roger Crisp, Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁵ G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy", in *Philosophy*33, no.124,195, 1958, pp.12-13.

tem based on the divine authority in which people ceased to believe) using instead the concepts of *virtues*.

Anscombe's revolutionary idea was that the current moral sense of terms such as "necessity", "obligation", "correct", "wrong" or "duty" was incoherent and unnecessary. This moral sense did not exist at all in Aristotle's work focused on the nature of virtues and on their role in a flourishing human life. The absence of moral obligation in Aristotle's works shows that a coherent theory of ethics does not need such a concept. This concept appeared as a product of Christianity, 2000 years ago, and its meaning depends on the belief in a divine legislator, God, because the existence of a superior power and authority is necessary to create a law as well as to impose an obligation. This way, the philosophers were given the possibility to choose to return to religious belief regarding ethics or to abandon obligation and necessity in the favor of more complex concepts such as virtues, vices and others, which was unprecedented at that time.

The main purposes of the essay "Modern Moral Philosophy" are philosophical and public; from the philosophical point of view, the work presents an analytical approach, with accent on language and definitions having a historical approach as well. The British philosopher was interested in the challenge of the words such as "ought to", but she was also interested in the clarification of certain concepts. She used the moral philosophy of Aristotle as a protection and as an argument against the modern moral philosophers: "Anybody who knows Aristotle's ethics and read works in modern philosophy must be surprised by the strong contrast between them."⁶ Elizabeth Anscombe contends that the ethics of the divine commandments as well as the ethics of Aristotle claim that it is bad to be unjust, while the consequentialists always allow circumstances in which doing unjust acts is correct: "A man is responsible for the bad consequences of his evil deeds, but he does not get any credit for the good ones; and, in contrast, he is not responsible for the bad consequences of his good actions."⁷

An action which is not sufficiently described or explained can be morally misunderstood. In terms of morality, the way in which we look

⁶ G.E.M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy", in *Philosophy*33, no.124,195,1958.

⁷ Ibidem, p.10

at the same action is different in different circumstances. For example, the destruction of one's house is usually considered a bad thing; however, if this is done in order to prevent the extending of the fire from a house to another in a village, the circumstances change and the way we look at the same action in moral terms also changes. The consequentialists would state that the predictable consequences (the salvation of other houses in the village) makes the unjust action correct from the moral point of view, but for Anscombe, that which makes a crucial difference is *the intention*. The British philosopher claims that the nuanced description of the action would mean that it is incorrect for an unjust action to be presented as being moral through its predictable consequences, as the consequentialists would claim.⁸ All that Elizabeth Anscombe saw as a general moral decline in the civil society, she considered as derived from consequentialism which gave permission for any kind of action, even seeming immoral, on the basis of its predictable consequences. Her worry regarding the consequentialism reached beyond philosophy entering the problematic arena of the public morality.

1.4. The Significance of Anscombe's Philosophical Ideas in Moral Philosophy

Anscombe's innovation in moral philosophy was the application of Aristotle's thinking to our contemporary problems. She analyzed Aristotle's virtue ethics which constitutes an approach based on the observation of the important values and concepts like wisdom, justice, courage, temperance, honesty which do not require either the concept of obligation or a divine legislator. The British philosopher considered that the moral philosophers were dealing with a dilemma: to return to a form of faith in a divine legislator or to follow a version of Aristotelian ethics of virtues.

Elizabeth Anscombe was the first philosopher suggesting that the moral philosophy have to return to the ethics of virtues. She was able to reconcile the rigid Roman-Catholicism with the teachings of Frege, Wittgenstein and Aristotle. Due to the fact that her thinking was so different from other moral philosophers of that time her ideas had the status of novelty and they gradually gained support. In her essay, "Modern

⁸ Ibidem, p.13

Moral Philosophy”, the British philosopher identified two elements with universal application: the first was a general analysis of the concept of morality and of the relation between the moral obligation and a supposed divine legislator; the second element was the contrast between the consequentialist approach of ethics and the approach based on virtues. The moral obligation had been deprived of its original meaning through the rejection of Christianity. Elizabeth Anscombe initiated the movement for virtue ethics in moral philosophy and she supported the return to the ethics of virtues as a logic conclusion of the contemporary quests in clarification and substantiation of central concepts in ethics.⁹

“Modern Moral Philosophy” is a key point for the beginning of the studies in virtue ethics and moral philosophy; it contributed to the transformation of moral philosophy in the 20th and 21st centuries, the essay having a great capacity to inspire the philosophers to initiate research in virtue ethics which continues to grow in popularity and academic rigor. The virtue ethics is the beginning point in fields such as political philosophy and applied ethics, a subdomain of moral philosophy centered on the application of moral principles to concrete situations containing subdivisions such as bioethics and ethics of technology investigating problems in the field of medical ethics and environmental ethics.

2. Alasdair MacIntyre and the Return to the Classical Values

The Scottish philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre is a supporter of small communities having as a purpose a good life in a social community with the others, an idea which is contrary to the endemic individualism of liberal thinking. His work, *After Virtue*, is addressed to the fail of capitalism to offer a structure for a good moral life for the individual and community. *After Virtue* is considered the most important and the most influential work by MacIntyre offering a revolutionary perspective in the field of moral philosophy, attacking all the important thinking schools in the field of moral philosophy: liberalism (founded on rights, freedom, equality for each individual), utilitarianism (based on the idea that the best action offers the best benefit for the most of the people) and deontology (an approach of moral philosophy with accent on duty and

⁹ Daniel C. Russel, *The Cambridge Companion to Virtue Ethics*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013).

moral obligation). MacIntyre not only analyzed these schools of thinking of moral philosophy, but he also scrutinized the religious aspect, especially Christianity, and political ideologies such as Marxism, which he approached from historical and multidisciplinary perspectives, from the Ancient Greece to Shakespeare and from Jane Austin to global financial markets and contemporary political maneuvers.

MacIntyre adopts an innovative method called *historicism* in which the philosopher studies the history of moral traditions by investigating rival moral traditions. MacIntyre's historicism was developed for two major motifs: the first consists in explaining the way in which a moral system, like other human phenomena, is a part of social life, "the moral concepts are embodied and partially constitutive to the forms of social life. A way to identify a form of social life as distinguished from other is the identification of the differences between the moral concepts of the two societies".¹⁰ In other words, ethical theories cannot be separated from historical, political and social facts. The second motif for using the historicism was the necessity to avoid the universalism in ethics (the supposition that one's morality is absolute and relevant for anybody) and the relativism in ethics (the belief that no morality is better than other), as well. The historical study helps us to understand the strong parts and the weak parts of moral systems which appeared along the history and to compare them.

According to Alasdair MacIntyre, in the circumstances of non-existence of a generally accepted standard, moral judgments can be done only taking into account the ancient role of virtue. *After Virtue*, his controversial work regarding the theory of moral thinking and moral behavior, constitutes a diagnosis of the moral philosophy of the 20th century. His controversial ideas opposed the liberal philosophy in modern politics approaching moral philosophy from historical perspective that emphasized the *historic context* in which the philosophic argument appeared.

MacIntyre started from the fact that modern moral philosophy failed in its trying to explain what the human being must do in order to live a better life. He exposes two main arguments. The first is that the moral philosophy became a subject of relativism and, despite the fact

¹⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Short History of Ethics*, (New York, MacMillan Publishing Co. Inc., 1966).

that there is no moral foundation, the politicians and philosophers continue to formulate statements and decisions about which they claim that are based on moral authority. Due to the fact that there is no agreement regarding what represents the basis of this moral authority, there is *no coherence* between the different perspectives in this sense, moral judgment being reduced to something a little more than an empty language based on manipulation. The Scottish philosopher calls “culture of emotivism” the belief that the moral statements can be reduced to emotional responses of approval or disapproval.

The second argument is MacIntyre’s opinion that the affirmation that a universal approach of moral philosophy could exist is false, arguing that it is not possible to find an approach of the questions regarding morality which can give a definition of a concept like justice, for example, which can be applied to all societies. Contrary to this idea, John Rawls considered that a universal approach of moral philosophy can be acquired through the method of “*ignorance veil*”, people forgetting any personal interest, taking into consideration justice without prejudices. MacIntyre considers impossible the obtaining of such a “veil” offering as an original solution the returning to Aristotle’s concepts regarding the practice of virtues, morality and politics in order to replace what is considered as dysfunctional system of moral philosophy with Aristotelian ethics of virtues which emphasizes the importance of virtues like prudence, justice, temperance, courage, compassion in the life of those able to act morally.

MacIntyre specified that the ethical system known as virtue ethics is not only older than ethical systems dominating modern thinking, but it is also the most capable to solve the moral disputes which characterize the modern world. His main purpose was to promote an understanding of morality for the individual and for the western culture, as well. Aristotle supported a moral system based on the life of a small community called *polis* (the Greek word for “citadel”) and this must have resonated with the small scale culture of MacIntyre’s ancestors. His work represents his abstract philosophical education and also his Scottish community descent, as the author argues abstractly in the favor of the philosophical superiority of Aristotle’s ethics and for the fact that Aristotle’s philosophy must be applied to small societies.

MacIntyre’s analysis of moral and political philosophy brought the virtue ethics formulated by Aristotle to the center of attention restoring

its relevance in the 20th century; he followed the view of Elizabeth Anscombe, developing the concept of virtue and explaining why the virtue was necessary for a moral accord. His arguments regarding the nature of virtues, the description of virtues place in the social life and in politics, as well as his critiques of modern moral philosophy constitute a coherent moral system which must be taken into account by any philosopher studying virtue ethics.

2.1. MacIntyre and the Main Theories of Contemporary Moral Philosophy

After Virtue tries, first of all, to answer the question "What is a good life?" in the context of the crisis of modern morality and of the disagreement between the main theories of the moral philosophy (deontology, utilitarianism and virtue ethics). The deontology, developed by Kant in the 18th century, emphasizes the duties; in the 20th century, Kant's view was reaffirmed by John Rawls in his work, *A Theory of Justice*, in which he argued that the justice is essentially linked to equality, supporting a concept of justice that was supposed to transcend all the cultures and times. John Locke's view reappeared in Robert Nozick's work, *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, in which he argued that justice was linked to the right. The British philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe showed that justice was a virtue: "In order to prove that an unjust man is bad it is necessary a presentation of justice as a virtue...and how it is linked to the actions in which is considered".¹¹ Utilitarianism, conceived by the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham and by his student, John Stuart Mill, was based on the opinion that only the consequences of an action decide if it is right or wrong.

Virtue ethics, dating from ancient times, affirmed that ethics acts firstly according to virtues that are moral qualities leading to right actions. In the 4th century BC, the Greek philosopher Aristotle of Stagira argued in favor of a moral philosophy based on virtues, this being linked to the teleological concept regarding the human nature supposing that the virtues exist for a purpose or goal; they help people to realize the behavior characteristic to human beings. For example, the virtue of cour-

¹¹ Gertrude Elizabeth Margret Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy", in *Philosophy* 33, no.124, 1958

age helps people to protect themselves and their beloved and the virtue of justice helps them to solve disputes. Aristotle's list of the most important virtues includes temperance, prudence, courage and justice constituting profound aspects of the character of a person having a right behavior. According to this system, the reason or the goal of moral life is not only to do correct deeds, but also to become the type of person for whom the right actions are natural and they are done for their sake only. For Aristotle, politics was tightly linked to a moral search as virtues were necessary not only for the individual flourishing but also for a useful participation to the life of society. MacIntyre argued that only understanding *how* the moral concepts were lost, could they be restored; a moral philosophy could be reestablished only recovering certain concepts from the history of thinking.

2.2. The Moral Debate and MacIntyre's Historical Approach

MacIntyre's historical approach was connected with several philosophical debates seeking to expand the goal of moral philosophy and establish the superiority of a view over another. The philosopher regarded the moral debate as one that cannot be solved both from an academic point of view and from an ordinary point of view. For example, he discussed the fact that there were incompatible moral positions regarding topics like abortion, redistribution of value and ethics of the war.¹² The author argued that it was difficult to solve anything as long as a common system of appreciation did not exist; the purpose of his quest was to find a generally accepted agreement. What happened to moral philosophy was a total fragmentation of language and of moral practice in the modern world:" the language and the appearance of morality persists even if the integral substance of morality was fragmented to a great extent and partially destroyed."¹³

MacIntyre was convinced that, even if our culture made affirmations and moral judgments, the systems that supported morality together sometime, now were separated. The result of this fragmentation which became a key problem of the modern world was the intrusion of *emotivism* in our culture. According to emotivism, moral affirmations

¹² Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.6-7

¹³ *Ibidem*, p.5

can be reduced to emotional responses of approval or disapproval. Despite the fact that he did not believe that everybody accepted emotivism consciously, the fact that he called “incommensurability” the debate in modern morality which has no rational means of resolution suggests that, in fact, our culture is emotivist in practice.

In *After Virtue*, the philosopher argued first that modern moral philosophy was characterized by two factors: incommensurability (impossibility to solve the differences in the most simple moral formulations) and emotivism (moral judgment is nothing more than a statement of agreement or disagreement).¹⁴ The second theme was addressed to the enlightenment project of justification of morality begun in the 18th century inside the enlightenment characterized by the *return to reason*. The philosophers were looking for a rational basis for morality in order not to depend on theological perspectives, that is they did not wish to suppose that there was an inherent goal, a destiny or a role for humanity. The third theme was the return to Aristotelian ethics of virtue in order to solve the disagreements of morality.

MacIntyre presented the modern moral philosophy as being almost in total disorder.¹⁵ The moral statements, the motifs and our daily moral life were stripped of their previous clarity and understanding by the domination of emotivism.¹⁶ The philosopher admitted that many people made statements which cannot be justified rationally. Emotivism was the cause of disagreements and of the lack of a rational agreement. After addressing moral incoherence, the author focused his attention on its historical causes identified in the failure of the enlightenment project to explain the traditional morality and he quoted three thinkers who approached this project: David Hume, who thought that the *human feelings* were the basis of the moral philosophy, Kant, who sought to ground the morality on *reason* only, while the Danish Soren Kierkegaard stated that morality can be grounded on the *individual will*.¹⁷ These three philosophers denied the teleological conception of human nature, according to which this is decided and defined by certain goals or functions in our behavior. The last main theme was that the Aristotelian ethics of virtues

¹⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.11

¹⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.2

¹⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.22

¹⁷ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.36-50

could give the necessary background and rational foundation for the moral statements. For MacIntyre, the virtues were necessary for fulfilling the social roles in community.¹⁸

2.3. The Significance of MacIntyre's Philosophical Ideas

MacIntyre affirmed that there was no morality as such.¹⁹ Thinking in terms of traditions, the grouping of some sets of moral statements is possible and considering them from sociological point of view, as well. Among the ideas supporting this argument is that of practice which is defined in part by its social teleological nature referring to a coherent and complex form of cooperative human activity socially established with its own set of “*internal goods*”²⁰ forming an intrinsic part from what makes the practice worthy, being realized during the trying to acquire those standards of excellence specific to that activity. For example, tennis and architecture are practices as they imply a set of internal goods, but not the driving or the profit increasing. In contrast, the “*external goods*” can be obtained without commitment in that specific practice. Linked to MacIntyre's concept of practice is his understanding regarding virtue, a developed characteristic that enables the human being to obtain those goods which are internal for practice and their absence prevents him to obtain such goods.²¹ For example, courage for a soldier or compassion for a nurse are vital for their practice to be successful. Therefore, virtues are crucial to reaching success in various practices or activities.

Another idea is the philosopher's concept of tradition in moral research which is important for his argumentation. MacIntyre thinks that moral statements and the arguments are intrinsic linked to certain historical, social and political conditions. In other words, in order to understand and analyze moral statements, first, we need to understand *the context* in which they appeared. According to MacIntyre, the final purpose of the philosopher should be to contribute to the moral and social life of community.

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre criticized the evils of the modern world

¹⁸ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.196-97

¹⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.266

²⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.187

²¹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (London, Duckworth, 2007), p.191

offering controversial solutions as a remedy.²² He was convinced that the Aristotelian Thomas Aquinas, the 13th century Italian theologian, was even more consistent than Aristotle in exposing the virtues: "I became a Thomist after writing *After Virtue*, in part due to the fact that I convinced myself that Thomas Aquinas was, in certain aspects, an Aristotelian better than Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas being not only an excellent interpreter of the Aristotelian texts, but he was capable to expand and deepen Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and the moral quest, as well."²³ Another change in MacIntyre thinking caused by Aquinas' writings was the conviction that the virtues can be explained according to the principles of teleology, that is the removing from the idea that the virtues are necessary and can make possible a certain social finality. Aquinas' writings led MacIntyre to investigate how our animal nature makes us dependent on the others. The idea of *dependence* completed the explanation regarding the way people develop their virtues.

After Virtue is one of the key texts in the revival of virtue ethics in moral philosophy. MacIntyre overturned the role of relativism in society and he contended that small communities are less predisposed to oppression than the modern bureaucratic state. His work also helped a certain revival in Christian theology and in the movement of the monastic life revival (as the monastery is also a small community). He considered that history was essential for the moral philosophy, all moral concepts and arguments springing from their social and historical context. His methodology, known as historicist, had a major impact on many influential thinkers in the field of political philosophy.

²² John Horton, Susan Mendus, *Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue and After*, (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 1994).

²³ Alasdair MacIntyre, Prologue to the third edition, *After Virtue*, (University of Notre Dame Press, Indiana, 2006), x.