

IS MACINTYRE'S PHILOSOPHY A KIND OF REALISM?

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1 *Postmodern scenario*

MacIntyre's analysis of the contemporary crisis, as such as disorder that does not make possible to overcome the moral disagreement, comes to awareness that "there seems to be no rational way of securing moral agreement in our culture"¹. In his more important writings, translated also in Italy, MacIntyre shows us the route that have lead toward into the actual state of crisis. It is an itinerary that, briefly, began rejecting the Aristotelian–Thomistic tradition and denying its own standards of rationality and putting forward a new standard of rationality focused on concepts of universality and necessity. It is a route that would have to lead on a sound grounding in ethics but it produced failures.

MacIntyre is describing the step from modernity to postmodernity.

In his rebuilding, the effort of a rational grounding of morality begun with abandon of an aristotelian kind of rationality in favor of an universalist and determinist kind of rationality had as a result the increasing of contending ethics theories. Contemporary culture has fallen into a state of serious disorder that people have only fragments of knowledge and simulacra of morality, people have lost the ability of moral understanding.

Therefore the effort of rational justification of ethics, that erects as a fundamental standard the ability of universalize, failed. And this failure, that is the failure of universalism point of view that correspond to the *Encyclopaedism*, has lead to the *Genealogical* tradition whose implications are relativism and perspectivism, categories that overlook the philosophical current scenario and with which we have to confront².

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1 See *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd edn. (including "Prologue: After Virtue after a Quarter of a Century"), University of Notre Dame Press, Duckworth, 2007, cit. p. 6 (hereafter AV)

2 MacIntyrean rebuilding of a disquieting suggestion in *After Virtue* is a postmodern scenario. He has picked out such elements as fragmentary nature of arguments, the caotic nature

Within this new scenario, this new *Weltanschauung*, it is impossible to conceive objective, uniform and orderly standpoint as well as to endorse objective ethics values.

The Enlightenment project failure has thrown us into the caotic emotivist culture in which, lacking objective and impersonal moral models, unique to provide the guarantee for moral agreement, prevail “expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling”³.

This is a scenario that shows clearly its condition of uncertainty, one condition in which lacking genuine elements of rational justification we are moving towards “continually falling” and we ask if “Is there still an up and a down?”⁴.

Doubtless MacIntyre is describing a post–nietzschean scenario⁵ where we have accepted not only that the real, the world in which live, is caotic and pluralistic but also that now we live without absolute and genuine certainties and that without eternal values truth is only an interpretation⁶.

But MacIntyre rejects skeptical and nihilistic outcomes of Enlightenment project failure and hence this scenario can not be a point of no return, this state of affairs can not declare the end of philosophy⁷.

Indeed the route showed by MacIntyre seems to be one of who, becoming aware of the failures caused by that kind of philosophical research, now is trying to provide a solution, that is, a new method of philosophical research that gives suitable answers to the problems of postmodernism, relativism

of real, the incommensurability of theories and the idea of the emotivist self understanding as an unembodied self that are all elements pointed out from postmodernists.

About general categories of postmodernity see J-F. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne* (1979) e *Le postmoderne expliqué aux enfants* (1986); see also Gianni Vattimo, italian representative postmodernist, *La fine della modernità* (1985) and with co–author P. A. Rovatti, *Il pensiero debole* (1983).

3 See AV, p. 12

4 F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Cambridge University Press ed. by B. Williams 2001, cit. p. 120, Aphorism 125 *The madman*

5 As for many critics of postmodernism also for MacIntyre the reference to Nietzsche is linked to the awareness of the state of crisis in which stand contemporary culture.

6 Clearly here the reference is Nietzsche, aphorism 22 *Beyond Good and Evil* that is the landmark of postmodernist utterance according to which there is no fact, but only interpretations.

7 In philosophy postmodern framework is linked with nietzschean concept of “the death of God” that discloses the end of metaphysic and at the same time the beginning of nihilism. Consideration about postmodern around the sixties of the twentieth century distinguishes itself for its interest to apocalyptic issues like about the end of art, the end of history (see F. Fukuyama, *The End of History?*, 1989 and *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992), the end of metaphysics and the end of philosophy understanding as branch of knowledge and form of thought.

For more details, please refer to Henry Redner, *The Ends of Philosophy* (1986) and the more recent Italian work of Peter Carravetta, *Del Postmoderno* (2009) ed. by Bompiani.

and perspectivism. This is the only way for improving the philosophical research.

MacIntyre takes seriously the issues of postmodernism and re-reading the modernity on the light of its own failures develops a new method of enquiry apt to solve the problem of moral disagreement that is to solve “the question of how the rival claims made by different traditions [...] are to be evaluated [...]” without “relativism and/or prospectivism might [...] prevail”⁸.

In other words he tries to show how is possible to hold in a rational way the superiority of one tradition against the rival one “if the only available standards of rationality are those made available by and within traditions”⁹.

Needless to say his commitment is to prove that his conception of rationality, the tradition-constituted rationality, does not imply relativism. And in this way MacIntyre is replying to the relativist challenge that deny “that rational debate between and rational choice among rival traditions is possible”¹⁰.

The other issue to which MacIntyre have to give a reply is the perspectivist challenge that “puts in question the possibility of making truth-claims from within any one tradition”¹¹ because “no one tradition can deny legitimacy to its rivals”¹²

Therefore MacIntyre must to reply to this two challenges showing both that it is possible rational debate and rational choice among contending traditions without putting trust in transcendent standards or norms, but starting by standards of rational justification internal to it, and that it is possible to make truth-claims from within any one tradition.

What is at stake in this argument regarding the progress of philosophical research that involves a belief in truth, it is the defense of a non-relativistic concept of truth. If MacIntyre gives an answer to these challenges, he will have shown both the failure of relativism and the one of perspectivism, that is on one hand the failure of those who assert the impossibility of rational choice among rival traditions because we can only speak of truth in relation to the previously hired schemata and by consensus¹³, and on the other hand the failure of those who support the elimination of any assignment of truth or falsity because no one tradition can deny the legitimacy of other tradi-

8 See *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, University of Notre Dame Press, Duckworth, 1988 cit. p. 354 (hereafter WJ?)

9 Ibid., p. 352

10 Ibid., p. 352

11 Ibid., p. 352

12 Ibid., p. 352

13 This is the conception of warranted assertability disapproved by MacIntyre in his several writings.

tions (perspectivism). In other words giving an answer to these challenges he will have proved that immanentism does not imply relativism¹⁴.

Many critics have debated with regard to the failure of MacIntyre's effort overcoming contemporary crisis and some of these have maintained that his theory shows itself weakness, but others that his position falls into relativism¹⁵. Nevertheless these issues have already found a reply¹⁶ and therefore is not my intention here to defend again macintyrean no-relativist position.

My purpose in this paper is both to display whose conceptual instruments MacIntyre makes use in order to reply to the relativism and perspectivism challenges and to figure out if we can accept his theory as a defense of realism than as a genuine form of realism at odds with drifts of postmodernity.

But first of all I would summarize his proposal.

2 *Intellectual inquiry*

According to MacIntyre post-nietzschean scenario developed after the Enlightenment project failure can and must be overcome.

Clearly in his writings MacIntyre maintains that in order to avoid moral relativism we should appeal to a criterion that is able to decide among contending and conflicting moral traditions.

Since MacIntyre rejects the Enlightenment project of rational foundation of morality that is independent of any historical contingency, so what is such standard?

Now MacIntyre has to deal with the problem of providing a standard of justification among rival traditions both without drawing upon the procedural rationality, namely the universalism that to solve moral disagreement relies on a transcendent norms of enquiry that is the view from nowhere¹⁷, and at the same time he has to avoid the Enlightenment project failures.

Indeed in his analyses about symptoms of current moral crisis MacIntyre recalls more than once that the absence of shared rational standard

14 Some critics have endorsed the failure of MacIntyre's argument about this point like for example says John Haldane in his *MacIntyre's Thomist Revival: What Next?* in *After MacIntyre* edited by Horton and Mendus, 1994 pp. 91–107

15 In the Postscript to the Second Edition of *After Virtue* MacIntyre recalls that, according some critics among whose Robert Wachbroit, his rejection of the Enlightenment project can only attain to relativistic thesis according to which "there is no moral rationality which is not internal to and relative to some particular tradition" (See AV, p. 276)

16 For more details, please refer to S. Lutz, *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre* (2004) especially chapter 3

17 Clearly here the reference is Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*, 1986

implies that moral debates are characterized by interminability and by arbitrary nature¹⁸.

Just because we should not accept this state of affairs it need to pinpoint one standard that can give us a compelling reply to the challenges of post-modernism without fall into the plot of the relativism and the perspectivism.

For these reasons, MacIntyre develops a concept of tradition understanding as a *intellectual research* that is a type of enquiry that not only arrives at an account of truth but also in so doing exemplify just the kind of account at which it arrives¹⁹. And this kind of intellectual enquiry has got its own rationality that is not procedural and formal like the modern concept of rationality, but it is “a matter of the kind of progress which it makes”²⁰.

Such intellectual enquiry has to begin from a set of initial problems, from some condition of pure historical contingency. Indeed because can not be any beginning without premises, one who pretends to begin enquiry from outside history or tradition, as MacIntyre says, “is to be a stranger to enquiry; it is to be in a state of intellectual and moral destitution”²¹.

Therefore it ought to start from relevant but not dogmatic beliefs that during the process of enquiry can be inadequate or insufficient and hence can be reformulated and reevaluated to repair inadequacies and overcome limitations, within an intellectual movement towards the truth.

Regarding the development of this intellectual enquiry forward the truth is crucial and strategic the concept of epistemological crisis.

Experience of epistemological crisis makes us aware “to recognize the possibility of systematically different possibilities of interpretation, of the existence of alternative and rival schemata which yield mutually incompatible accounts of what is going on around”²² us.

18 See not only *After Virtue* especially chapter 2, but for ex. see also *A Crisis in Moral Philosophy: Why Is the Search for the Foundations of Ethics So Frustrating?* (1976) and *Moral Pluralism without Moral Relativism* (1999)

19 See *Truth as a Good: A Reflection on Fides et Ratio*, in James J. McEvoy & Michael Dunne eds., *Thomas Aquinas, Approaches to Truth: The Aquinas Lectures at Maynooth, 1996–2001*, Four Courts Press, 2002 (reprinted in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Selected Essays vol. 1: The Tasks of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press 2006). cit. from *The Task of Philosophy* p. 211(hereafter TG)

20 See WJ?, p. 354

21 Ibid., p. 367

22 See *Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science*, in *The Monist* 60:4, 453–72, 1977 (reprinted in Gary Gutting ed., *Paradigms and Revolutions: Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1980; in Stanley G. Clarke & Even Simpson eds., *Anti-Theory in Ethics and Moral Conservatism*, State University of New York Press, 1989; and in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Selected Essays vol. 1: The Tasks of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2006) cit. p. 4 from *The Tasks of Philosophy* (hereafter EC)

That is a type of crisis that can occur in the history of individuals, in the history of groups but may also occur within a whole tradition and its own solution involves philosophical and intellectual progress, that is as a progressive approach to the truth.

Overcoming epistemological crisis is what allows the rational choice among traditions and this is very key point that separates MacIntyre's position from Kuhn's position and from the concept of gestalt switch, a concept from which Kuhn's position was labelled as irrationalist and relativist²³.

These crises start with the awareness that the intellectual resources internal to tradition seem to be insufficient to solve new problems and with the awareness that exist alternative, different and rival schemata which yield mutually incompatible accounts and these crises are fundamental not only because they make us aware of the error but also because they enable us to understand that knowledge is capable of errors and then improvable.

In addition passing through an epistemological crisis successfully leads its adherents toward "imaginative conceptual innovation"²⁴ on which we can achieve what could not have achieved prior to that innovation.

The solution of epistemological crisis, thereby, allows the adherents of a tradition to rewrite not only the history of tradition in more careful way but also to identify more accurately the justificatory structure that holds up all claims of truth made within it, claims which are more and other than claims of warranted assertibility²⁵.

Solving epistemological crisis successfully, thereby, means both to make a rational choice between contending traditions coming from the standards of rational justification internal to a tradition, and make claims of truth within any tradition. This means answering to the relativism and perspectivism challenges.

3 *Conceptual Instruments of Realism*

Analyzing in more depth this account that I have shortly sketched allows to understand if MacIntyre's philosophy can be included into the realism understood as a cultural movement that has invaded the contemporary philosophical culture not only into epistemological and metaphysical fields but

23 Reference is the well-known event of London Congress in 1962 where there was a disagreement between Popper's and Kuhn's scholars.

It is also noteworthy that Kuhn himself tried to defend himself against the charges of relativism and irrationalism in several papers following *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) and now collected in *The Essential Tension* (1977).

24 See WJ?, p. 362

25 *Ibid.*, p. 363

also in scientific and moral one and that it has distinguished itself like as a reaction to postmodernism²⁶.

First of all I need to analyze the main conceptual instruments which MacIntyre uses to give a reply to the postmodern challenges.

Therefore in this section my aim is to display that for replying to the postmodern challenges MacIntyre trusts to Aristotelian and Thomistic set of instruments, whose absence seems to make drop his arguments into relativism and perspectivism.

Particularly I show three key concepts of tradition enquiry that no doubt are linked with Aristotelian and Thomistic philosophy, namely historical contingency, first principles and correspondence theory of truth.

3.1 Historical Contingency

Certainly even the less attentive reader has noticed that MacIntyre in his writings gives prominence to historical contingency.

Actually his inquiry about symptoms of moral crisis shows that it has spread just after the abandon of historical significance from ethics, namely the abandon of historical roots of ethics. The research of general and timeless ethical model that are expression of the Enlightenment project of rational grounding in ethics has led to ethical relativism. According to MacIntyre's analysis, moral relativism is nothing but the evidence how was disastrous the idea to build a timeless ethical theory and without history.

Every standard's enquiry of rational justification that allows to decide among controversial ethical issues can not begin from transcendent norms and principles but such as enquiry has to start in and from genuine historical contingency.

In other words within this type of enquiry there is not an independent starting point, namely a starting point unrelated to whatever traditions and this because every intellectual enquiry always begins from the standpoint of such particular tradition²⁷.

MacIntyre is building a method of intellectual enquiry whose reasoning, that is a dialectical one, starting from a set of background beliefs allows to solve practical disagreement, namely moral disagreement.

26 In the Italian philosophical view for ex. the reaction to postmodernism well-represented by the idea of weakness of thought, by lack of ground and by crisis of reason (see G. Vattimo e P. A. Rovatti, *Il pensiero debole*, 1983) has brought back up debate about realism. And now several Italian philosophers support a realistic standpoint (see M. Ferraris, *Il manifesto del nuovo realismo*, 2012). For more details about current Italian debate please see Franca D'Agostini, *Realismo? Una questione aperta*, Bollati Boringheri, Torino 2013

27 See WJ? chapter XVIII

It is worth noting that MacIntyre seems to follow the basic stages of dialectical reasoning whose Aristotle talks about for example in *Topics* (I 1, 100a 1–b 25) and in *Nicomachean Ethics* (VII 1, 1145b 5), that is a kind of reasoning allows to recognize truth from false following on from solutions of *aporias* or inadequacies and leads us toward discovery of principles of sciences²⁸.

MacIntyre is following the stages of “a line of inquiry whereby we shall be able to reason from opinions that are generally accepted (*éndoxa*) about every problem propounded to us, and also shall ourselves, when standing up to an argument, avoid saying anything that will obstruct us”²⁹. Therefore it is from those opinions that are generally accepted, from *éndoxa* that are generally accepted that can begin dialectical reasoning³⁰.

Furthermore in *Topics* Aristotle pinpoints common opinions as the opinions that are generally accepted “by every one or by the majority or by the philosophers— i.e. by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and illustrious of them”³¹.

These opinions, Aristotle reminds us again, are nothing but things which are more knowable to us. But because things which are more knowable to us are not clearer and more knowable by nature, they are need to review.

This is what Aristotle says when he explains his general methodological point of view that we can find both in *Physics* I,1 184a 10–21 and in the *Nicomachean Ethics* I, 1095b 1–3, according to which in the enquiry we must advance from what is more obscure by nature, but clearer to us, towards what is more clear and more knowable by nature, and later by analysis (says Aristotle) by activities as identification, reindification, collecting, separating and so on (says MacIntyre) the elements and principles become known to us.

Ultimately, background beliefs as are referred by MacIntyre represent “endoxal” premises³² of dialectical reasoning, namely they represent beliefs on which people are agree and such beliefs are evaluated like as a truth even though these premises are obscure. Good or evil such premises are our starting point to reach truths more clear and more knowable by nature.

28 Regarding an interpretation of Aristotelian dialectical reasoning see Enrico Berti, *L'uso scientifico della dialettica in Aristotele*, in *Giornale di Metafisica*, n. XVII, 1995 pp. 169–89

29 Aristotle, *Topics*, 100a 18–21

30 See Aristotle, *Topics* I, 100a 30–31 “reasoning [...] is ‘dialectical’, if it reasons from opinions that are generally accepted”

31 *Ibid.*, 100b 21–23. It is worth noting that in ancient Greek idioms that point out *philosophers* and *most notable and illustrious of them* are *toi sofoi* and *endoxoi*, respectively. For more details about *endoxa* as reputable things’ please see J. Barnes, *Aristotle and the methods of ethics*, in *Revue Internationale de la Philosophie*, n. 34, 1981 pp. 490–511

32 Please see again paper of E. Berti, *cit.* to clarify attribution of truth degree to *endoxa* and avoid to confuse *endoxa* and empirical data that in ancient Greek are *dokounta o fainomena*.

3.2 First Principles

Carrying on the explanation of his intellectual enquiry method, the tradition–constituted and tradition–constitutive method of enquiry, MacIntyre maintains “[i]n systematizing and ordering the truths they take themselves to have discovered, the adherents of a tradition may well assign a primary place in the structures of their theorizing to certain truths and treat them as first metaphysical or practical principles”³³, namely as first principles that have had to undergo the process of historical and dialectical justification.

MacIntyre portrays intellectual enquiry as a process, as a movement starting from historical contingency, from set of established and accepted beliefs. In this process one should start from established beliefs and after their review by means of dialectical and historical method of enquiry one can arrive to give them the role of first principles.

Intellectual inquiry of which MacIntyre gives an account is neither an inductive kind of understanding or a deductive one. The former is to be ruled out to the extent that the intellectual enquiry begins from historical contingency evaluated as *endoxa*. Indeed as well as Aristotle says *endoxa* are not to be confused with empirical data (*fainomena* or *dokounta*) whose treatment needs an inductive method of enquiry³⁴. Alike the latter is to be cast aside because deductive method of enquiry belongs only to sciences, to “a perfected type of understanding”³⁵ which employing analytical reasoning deduces consequences from self–evident premises or principles.

Therefore intellectual inquiry of which MacIntyre gives an account is one that makes use of dialectical reasoning³⁶, a type of reasoning that starting from established beliefs (*endoxa*) and remedying to inadequacies, distin-

33 MacIntyre, *Whose Justice?*, p. 360

34 This point is discussed also by T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*, Oxford University Press, 1988, especially § 22. In this discussion Irwin notices the importance of induction for dialectical reasoning and he relates aristotelian writings that highlight the connection between induction and dialectic. The same consideration we can find in MacIntyre that in WJ? maintain that “Aristotle regards *epagōgē* also as a part of dialectic”, cit. p. 91

35 MacIntyre, *First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues*, Marquette UP, 1990 (reprinted in Kelvin Knight ed., *The MacIntyre Reader*, Polity Press, University of Notre Dame Press 1998 and in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Selected Essays vol. 1: The Tasks of Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, 2006), cit. from The Task of Philosophy, hereafter FP, p. 155

36 The presence of Aristotelian and Thomistic elements in the rebuilding of macintyrean intellectual enquiry method is very important and this allows to clarify its relationship with the philosophy of science.

Indeed many critics have stressed the similarity of macintyrean tradition enquiry with Kuhn, but they wrong because they do not take into account the influence of Aristotelian and Thomistic tradition of enquiry.

guishes itself as a reasoning wherein lies the path to the first principles of all inquiries (*archai*)³⁷.

Necessarily this type of reasoning is a dialectical reasoning because first principles that this intellectual enquiry considers, a intellectual enquiry whose purpose is the end of moral disagreement and so moral crisis, are not first principles of perfected science, namely self-evident first principles and whose meaning is immediately understood by all³⁸; but these type of first principles are to be vindicate themselves by dialectical and historical process and they are “evident only in the context of the conceptual framework of some more or less large-scale theory”³⁹.

Needless to say first principles are first not by consensus but by nature forasmuch as their firstness can not to be relativized “to social contexts and individual purposes”⁴⁰.

To this regard, explicitly MacIntyre refers to Aquinas and he quotes *Summa Theologiae* in which Aquinas explains the twofold according to which first principles are known⁴¹.

My opinion is MacIntyre mentions Aquinas in this specific point to highlight distance between ancient concept of substantial first principles and modern idea of epistemological first principles “of which Cartesian cogito [...] provides a paradigmatic instance”⁴² and that MacIntyre labels as mythological beasts⁴³.

Behind his defense of substantial first principles there is his critique of the concept of Reason that pretends obtaining first principles from itself because such as first principles are known by intuition and from such first principles every knowledge follows deductively.

3.3 Correspondence Theory of Truth

To this point I think having sufficiently underlined how Macintyre gives prominence of both historical contingency and “endoxal” first principles.

37 See Aristotle, *Topics* 101b 3–4

38 See MacIntyre cit., FP, cit. pp. 147–8

39 Ibid., p. 147. See also WJ? chap. XVIII specially p. 360

40 Ibid., p. 145

41 See MacIntyre, cit. FP, p. 147 in which he mentions Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia-IIae 94, 2 “Dicitur autem aliquid per se notum dupliciter, uno modo, secundum se; alio modo, quoad nos. Secundum se quidem quaelibet propositio dicitur per se nota, cuius praedicatum est de ratione subiecti, contingit tamen quod ignoranti definitionem subiecti, talis propositio non erit per se nota. [...] Quaedam vero propositiones sunt per se notae solis sapientibus, qui terminos propositionum intelligunt quid significant”

42 Ibid., pp. 146–7

43 Ibid., p. 147

Now I would talk about another conceptual instrument that he employs in defending of his theory from the charges of relativism. This is the correspondence theory of truth.

Carrying on with his thesis MacIntyre maintains that “implicit in the rationality of such enquiry there is indeed a conception of a final truth, that is to say, a relationship of the mind to its objects which would be wholly adequate in respect of the capacity of that mind”⁴⁴; a conception of truth that has nothing to do with the Absolute Knowledge of the Hegelian system because “no one at any stage can ever rule out the future possibility of their present beliefs and judgments being shown to be inadequate in a variety way”⁴⁵.

It is possible to clarify this thesis getting back to the Thomistic account of correspondence theory of truth according to which truth is *adaequatio rei et intellectus*⁴⁶, a theory according to which mind has to conform itself to how things are, and because truth standard of human beliefs is in things that are measure of mind, this later possesses truth only if it conforms itself to how things are. Regarding this thesis Aquinas recalls Aristotle that in *Metaphysics*⁴⁷ claims that “It is not because we think truly that you are pale, that you are pale, but because you are pale we who say this have the truth”⁴⁸. These words say that our mind is measured by natural things, but not measures natural things. Also in *Categories*⁴⁹ Aristotle says that things determine the truth of our claims.

Embracing correspondence theory MacIntyre claims that “the mind that understands is such that its thoughts not only of how things are, but also of why they are as they are, are identical with how they are and with why they are as they are”⁵⁰. Therefore mind conforms itself to how things are and conforming itself understands why things are as they are. And all this is possible because there is an objective reality.

Furthermore correspondence theory of truth also hold up the firstness of first principles, principles that are known by nature just because they describe the objective reality. Indeed according to Irwin, that displays the realism of Aristotle, something is known by nature “because it is a primary feature of the world and it is known to us only if we are in the right cognitive condition to discover what is really there”⁵¹.

44 See WJ?, p. 360

45 Ibid., p. 361

46 See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 16, a. 2; *Contra Gent.*, I, 59; *De Ver.* I, I resp.

47 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* IX, 10, 1053a 33 e X, 1, 1053a 33

48 See Aristotle, *Metaph.* IX, 10 1051b 5

49 See Aristotle, *Categ.* 14b 11–23

50 MacIntyre, TG cit., p. 205

51 T. Irwin, *Aristotle's First Principles*, Oxford University Press, 1988

All of things being so, on the grounding of this thesis there must be a metaphysical presupposition according to which “there is an order of things and that this order exists independently of the human mind”⁵² (this is a metaphysical presupposition underlay to different realist thesis), and the mind conforms itself to this order. And the relationship of correspondence reveals itself in judgments, but judgments doesn't conform themselves to realities. Judgments as a secondary expression of intelligent thought explain correspondence or the lack of it between mind and realities.

This is to say that “the words that would have to be used to specify the content of such thoughts are the very same words that would tell us how things are and why they are as they are”⁵³.

4 *Conclusions*

After having discussed these references, now I have to realize if such as considerations provide an appropriate answer to failures of postmodernism and if MacIntyre's thesis can be included into the realism.

First of all I try to understand if appealing to Aristotelian and Thomistic tools leads toward into realism the Macintyre's thesis.

Regarding correspondence theory of truth is clear that MacIntyre holds a realist position that rely on existence of an order of things whose being does not depend on human mind, and this is clear because he says that there is “a metaphysical presupposition of this view of truth that there is an order of things and that this order exists independently of the human mind”⁵⁴.

In *Truth as a Good* MacIntyre argues against who, like Crispin Wright, disapproves realism because this thesis does not avoid the gap between thought and reality, but it supposes that human being can know and understand the world. But in this way the realism gives to truth only a metaphysical presupposition to which antirealist thinkers oppose the pragmatist idea of warranted assertibility.

Therefore MacIntyre have to reply to these critiques and in so doing he should defend a kind of realism that reduces the gap between thought and reality and at the same time he should show an account of truth which are more and other than a claims to warranted assertibility.

Appealing to aristotelian–thomistic conceptual instruments MacIntyre shows that is possible both to reduce the gap between mind and reality and to hold a claims to truth “which are more and other than a claims to warranted assertibility”⁵⁵ and this because there is a special kind of relationship

52 See TG, p. 206

53 Ibid., p. 205

54 Ibid., p. 206

55 See, WJ?, p. 363

between mind and things about which we speak judgments. This relationship is crucial to talk about true or false of our own judgments and beliefs. He says "What is fundamental to our conception of truth then is the notion of a type of relationship that may hold or fail to hold between a mind and those subject matters about which it passes judgments"⁵⁶.

To argue that a theory is true, is not just to claim that it is not possible to prove that is not true, but it is also to claim that the mind which expresses his thoughts in this thesis is actually adequate to its object. The issue is: how does the mind conform to the object? Or, that is the same: What kind of relationship is that adequacy?

Adequacy is a matter of causal relationship, a type of relationship according to which the objects of the mind are determined or caused by the way things are, and so the mind "becomes more and more adequate in respect of those subject matters about which it judges"⁵⁷. Therefore assuming the ontological primacy in place of the epistemology one we can reduce the gap between thought and reality. So this decrease is possible only if one admit the ontological primacy rather than epistemological one, and if one admits that we can know only what it really is.

Moreover this kind of realism that recalls Aquinas' thought allows to recognize the ontological value of words and indeed MacIntyre says that "words that would have to be used to specify the content of such thoughts are the very same words that would tell us how things are and why they are as they are"⁵⁸.

All of these features are evident in the presentation of the macintyrean correspondence theory of falsity, according to which the real objects that the mind encounters reveal themselves as they are and when the mind is unable or fails to re-present manifestness then falsity appears that is inadequacy of the mind towards its objects⁵⁹.

All of this being so it seems to be possible to admit the coherence between this realism and the claims of fallibilism of which MacIntyre talks on the postscript of *After Virtue*. Indeed just because falsity (learned as a mismatch between what the mind then judged and believed and the reality as now perceived, classified and understood⁶⁰) is known retrospectively as inadequacy passed, MacIntyre can claim that no one can ever rule out the future possibility of their present beliefs being shown to be inadequate⁶¹.

56 See TG, p. 207

57 Ibid., p. 207

58 Ibid., p. 205

59 See WJ? cit., p. 357

60 Ibid., p. 356

61 Ibid., p. 361

The fallibilism then is an issue related to the human mind and its judgments and not to the reality.

Therefore correspondence theory of falsity might make it possible to place the MacIntyre's thought into the realism understood as a cultural movement that developed itself such as a reaction to the postmodernism, although some peculiarities and differences remain. One of these is that the correspondence theory that for example is defended by those who recognize themselves as representative of the new Anglo-Saxon realism (supporting correspondence between facts and judgments) leaves aside the metaphysical vision. And this point is disapproved by MacIntyre. But beyond differences it can be argued that the correspondence theory as it has been shown by MacIntyre arises like a reply to anti-realists thinkers who argued that there are many rival theories that explain (well) the reality. In other words, the realism that comes from the correspondence theory of falsity provides the answer to the challenges of postmodernism.

Abstract

IS MACINTYRE'S PHILOSOPHY A KIND OF REALISM?

MacIntyre's reply to the failure of the Enlightenment project has been labeled itself as a form of relativism by a good part of his critics, according to which, if the MacIntyre's aim was to find a solution to the failure of the Enlightenment project, he would have failed. He would not reply carefully to relativism and perspectivism. He would not be able to build a convincing theory that escapes relativism and perspectivism, "the protagonist of post-Enlightenment", but he would be a relativist thinker.

How can this mistake be avoided?

MacIntyre deals with this issue in different writings and he develops a new method of enquiry that gives an appropriate answer to the problems of postmodernism, that is, relativism and perspectivism.

Answering to this challenge, in his later writings, MacIntyre does appeal to Thomism's synthesis and improves a concept of tradition as a intellectual inquiry, that is a background within which it is possible to explain the authentic meaning of the correspondence theory of truth where the first principles that lead the intellectual inquiry have a capital role.

The MacIntyre's effort is thereby to connect his historical inquiry with the Thomism's metaphysics.

It would seem then that MacIntyre's philosophy can place within the realism position that it has developed as reaction to post-modernity.

KEYWORDS: postmodernism, relativism, prospectivism, realism