THE POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ALASDAIR MACINTYRE'S CLAIMS OF *DEPENDENT RATIONAL ANIMALS*[*]

Andrius Bielskis
Mykolas Romeris University
Department of Political Science
Valakupiu str. 5, LT-10101 Vilnius
E-mail: andrius.bielskis@mruni.eu

This paper engages with the key philosophical claims of Alalsdair MacIntyre's Dependent Rational Animals. *I argue that despite MacIntyre's convincing accounts of an alternative Aristotelian social ontology, and the political structures of the common, his emphasis on the politics of communal self-defense is dubious unless the proponents of Aristotelian politics are in the position to challenge the power of limitless capital accumulation. The paper also engages with Aristotle's conception of virtue and the role legislation plays in our attempts to acquire virtues. Finally, on the basis of Karl Marx's distinction between necessary labour time and surplus labour time, this paper offers a new concept – Exploitation Calculus – which is designed to measure the level of the exploitation of labour in a given company.*

Keywords: *Alasdair MacIntyre,* Dependent Rational Animals*, the politics of the common good, Aristotle, virtue, communal self-defense, emancipation, global capitalism, exploitation calculus.*

Introduction

Alasdair MacIntyre in *After Virtue* famously claimed that "[w]hat matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages" (MacIntyre 2007: 263). Ever since the publication of *After Virtue* his political project can be described as a form of communal self-defense. So, in the introduction to the 1995 edition of *Marxism and Christianity,* MacIntyre claimed that "what is most urgently needed is a politics of self-defense for all those local societies that aspire to achieve some relatively self-sufficient and independent form of participatory practice-based community and that therefore need to protect themselves from the corrosive effects of capitalism and the depredations of state power" (MacIntyre 1995: xxvi).

In this paper I want to explore to what extent the politics of local communities is influenced and threatened by the powers of global capitalism and by the modern nation-state. To do so, I will first of all engage with MacIntyre's Aristotelian account of human flourishing developed in *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999). There MacIntyre argues that a flourishing human life needs the political structures of community life, which have to satisfy Karl Marx's formulas

* I am greatly indebted to Ruth Groff and Stephen M. Garrett for valuable comments on the first draft of this paper.

for justice: to each independent practical reasoner according to what she/he contributes, on the one hand, and from each disabled and dependent person according to her or his ability, to each according to her or his needs, on the other hand. Following Aristotle's account of *arete* as intimately linked to law-making (which is the essential function of the political), I will then argue that the self-defense of practice-based local communities will necessarily fail unless there is a more fundamental attempt politically to combat the destructive and irrational power of capital. Thus it is in the interest of the members of local communities to engage in politics on the national and international levels in order to defend (both in theory and in practice) an Aristotelian anthropology presupposed by and embedded in the politics of the common good over the liberal-individualist anthropology of *laissez-faire* capitalism.

The Claims of *Dependent Rational Animals*

There is good reason to put *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999) at the centre of MacIntyre's practical philosophy. From the first edition of *After Virtue* in 1981 to *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* and then to *Dependent Rational Animals* (hereafter *DRA*), MacIntyre's position has shifted significantly: from Aristotelianism to Thomistic Aristotelianism or from Aristotelianism conceptualized in terms of the unity of life, practices, and culturally embedded traditions, to one grounded in a metaphysical biology[1]. *DRA* is where MacIntyre's Aristotelian metaphysical biology is articulated most clearly. Given that metaphysical biology is at the center of MacIntyre's mature philosophical thought, it is possible to consider *DRA* as the key to understanding MacIntyre's philosophy, including his political philosophy.

One of the main arguments in *Dependent Rational Animals* centers on human agency where a person, within the structures of giving and receiving, must acknowledge his or her dependence on others in order to become an independent practical reasoner. We have become what we are – successful moral agents able to judge and act on a variety of goods – due to care, love, education, criticism, and correction, all of which we have received from others at different times and in different places. One of the key goals of ethical life, then (if, indeed, we accept an Aristotelian understanding of ethical life broadly understood), is to become an independent

[1] Metaphysical biology will be understood here as a philosophical position which looks at the social life through the notion of teleology formulated first of all by Aristotle. Its key assumption is that in as much as we can more or less accurately know what constitutes flourishing life for different animal species and plants, so it is equally meaningful to ask the question of human *qua* human flourishing. Thus despite the fact that human flourishing is partly an open ended social and historical phenomenon – it is influenced by the social environment and it changes in the course of human history, furthermore, it can and does take different cultural forms in different cultures – it is still possible to talk about external conditions and internal features which are essential for any human *qua* human wellbeing. Of course, a defensible account of metaphysical biology today should accept Ch. Darwin's theory of evolution and thus reject Aristotle's notion that species are eternal and unchangeable. It is the revised version of Aristotelian metaphysical biology that we find in MacIntyre's mature philosophical work. For the short statement of the importance of metaphysical considerations as well as how his position has changed since the first edition of *After Virtue*, see MacIntyre (2007: xi). Also, for the scholarly accounts of MacIntyre's philosophical transition see Thomas D. Andrea (2006), Christopher Lutz (2009), and Marian Kuna (2010).

practical reasoner who is able to not only understand and achieve her own individual good, but also to contribute to the good of others. It is because we first received care, education, and unconditional love from others, and have become capable of achieving our individual goals, that justice requires us to acknowledge our former dependence.

In so arguing, MacIntyre elaborates on Aristotle's conception of *zoon politikon*. That is to say, practical rationality and moral agency are not simply given, such that they may serve, as it were, as the unproblematic premise of moral theory; rather, they are (successfully or unsuccessfully) developed through a set of social relations which may be either beneficial or detrimental to them. The self is social and political entity *par excellence*, thus the notion of disengaged reason is a fiction of a certain type of modern moral philosophy, the philosophy which MacIntyre rejects.[2]

However, the thesis of acknowledged dependence is more fundamental than a mere recognition of our debt to particular others. We are dependent on the social networks of giving and receiving both because human life is essentially marked by bodily (that is to say, animal-like) vulnerability *and* because it is lived through at least three different stages of its development – childhood dependency, adult independence, and our dependence on the care of others when we are old. The first aspect of the acknowledged human dependence lies also in the fact that human bodily vulnerability is always present in our lives, that is, as a possibility of injury and/or disability. Therein lies the importance of learning from the disabled members of our communities. This is the need which is far more radical and demanding than a mere liberal dictum of tolerance and (legal) protection of those who are disabled. The second aspect of dependence rests on the fact that even when we are most capable and independent, when our faculties are at their peak, there will be a stage in our lives when we are dependent on the care of others again. The social embodiment of acknowledged dependence and vulnerability sustain the *asymmetrical* networks of giving and receiving. We are called to give to meet the needs of others (whoever they may be), give without necessarily expecting to receive something back from them. Asymmetry allows us to combat tribalism and mafia like justice put forward by Simonides in the first book of Plato's *Republic*.

These social networks of giving and receiving are what constitute and sustain the social and political body of a local community. MacIntyre argues that for these networks to function well, their members should practice the key virtues that acknowledge dependence: practical wisdom (that is, a sound use of practical rationality), courage, just generosity, temperance, truthfulness, honesty. We learn these and other virtues both due to existing social structures and networks as well as due to our engagement in a variety of practices through which we achieve (or fail to achieve) goods internal to these practices, goods which we start to consider as our own. Both in *DRA* and elsewhere MacIntyre argues that the goods internal to the practices, which contribute to our flourishing *qua* human flourishing, enable us

[2] For MacIntyre's critique of modern moral philosophy see his *After Virtue* (2007: 51-120).

to learn how to distinguish between what seems to be good and what truly constitute our genuine good. So our ability to recognize and reject impertinent and/or immediate desires, i.e., those which motivate us to pursue goals that, in the long run, contribute to our frustration or the frustration of others, is essential both for individual and for communal flourishing.

Virtues also allow us to realize that one's individual good, in as much as it is achieved through a variety of practices and activities which are always cooperative, is impossible to realize without the existence of, and our own contribution to, the structures of the common good. It is precisely the notion of the common good – which can be realized only through rational deliberation with others and should not be confused with any form of nationalist sentiment or the feeble rhetoric about communitarian spirit – that is presupposed by Aristotelian metaphysical biology, which is essentially linked to the politics of local community. That is, our human *qua* human life, indeed the flourishing life, the best life possible, cannot be lived without the political structures of the common good.

It is noteworthy that this implicit conclusion of MacIntyre's Thomistic Aristotelianism is in line with Aristotle's definition of the polis as "a community of similar people aiming at the best possible life," aiming at *eudaimonia* as "some sort of activation or complete exercise of virtue", and as something which is "prior in nature to the individual" (Aristotle 1998, 1328a, 1253a). Thus human flourishing is essential both for Aristotle and for a post-*After Virtue* MacIntyre and their conceptions of *political* community. The key question now is to discern how MacIntyre understands political community, and what its contemporary forms are.

The Politics of Local Communities

MacIntyre's answer is well-known. It can be only local community.[3] However, this does not mean that MacIntyre's position should be conceptualized as communitarianism.[4] MacIntyre has repeatedly argued that the conceptualization of the politics of local communities should not be understood in terms of the communitarian prioritization of (local) community *qua* (local) community (1998: 241, 1999: 142). Local communities are important in as much as they enable the realization of the common good. MacIntyre's argument that the Aristotelian politics of the common good can be realized only within local communities requires him to conclude that families, on the one hand, and the modern nation-states, on the other, cannot be the bearers of the common good. Families are not sufficient in meeting a variety of needs for their members, and their flourishing is always dependent on and linked to the well-being of wider communities. The modern nation-state is the locus of a variety of competing social interests which, as a rule, are settled not through widespread shared rational deliberation, but due to the money

[3] For a critical account of MacIntyre's conception of the politics of local community see Murphy (2003); for an alternative account see Bielskis (2008). As will become evident from the argument developed in this paper, I am now far more critical towards the feasibility of the politics of local communities than I used to be.

[4] Probably the most famous interpretation of MacIntyre's political philosophy in terms of communitarianism is S. Mulhall and A. Swift (1992). K. Knight (1996) was one of the first to reject the communitarian reading of MacIntyre as unfounded and inaccurate.

and political power of each bargaining interest group.

So the politics of the modern nation-state, and, indeed, international relations, are the politics of the Nietzschean power games where those who win are the ones who have more money and power while those who lose are always the ones who do not have or have less of these resources. Thus, since practical rationality can only be fully exercised through shared rational deliberation, it needs local settings where widespread public deliberation, when all the voices are heard, can be advanced. These local communities are what MacIntyre considers as truly political settings. Yet, what exactly are they?

The most often used examples are taken from practice-based communities and/or practice-based institutions contributing to the common good: schools, orchestras, research departments, natural science laboratories, theaters, fishing crews, churches. To these more commonly used examples MacIntyre has recently added four more examples: the Jesuit-led Guarani Indian settlements of 17th century in Paraguay, the 19th century kibbutzim in Palestine, the mid 20th century Marxist political settlement of Kerala in Southern India, and the political community of fishing cooperatives in Co. Donegal on the West coast of Ireland.[5] In each of these and other cases the embodiments of the genuine common good cannot be conceptualized through their reduction to the sum of individual goods nor should they be misunderstood in terms of public goods. The latter – street lights, policing, minimal social security, roads and infrastructure, etc. – no matter how important they are, contribute to the achievement of the goods of individuals *qua* individuals rather than *qua* members of this or that practice of the common good.

Thus, within the context of MacIntyre's political philosophy, we can provide the following working definition of the common good: it is a political and social network of giving and receiving due to which both individual and communal flourishing becomes possible via widespread rational deliberation. What is essential for such shared deliberation is the possibility of arriving at a common mind. What matters is the soundness of practical reasoning and the accuracy of action in pursuing common goods, rather than the bargaining power of a particular interest group.

What we need to ask then is: what are and should be the relationships between the larger political structures of advanced modernity *and* the local political communities conceptualized in Thomistic Aristotelian terms? Furthermore, should the modern liberal nation-state not be the locus of the politics of the common good only because of its size (quantity), or are there substantive and structural (that is, qualitative) reasons as well?

It seems that MacIntyre's answer to the second question is both. In *DRA* he states that

> although most citizens share […] in such public goods as those of minimal secure order, the distribution of goods by government in no way reflects a common mind arrived at through widespread shared deliberation governed by norms of rational enquiry. Indeed the size of modern states would itself preclude this (MacIntyre 1999: 131)

[5] Cf. MacIntyre's lecture "Two Kinds of Political Reasoning" delivered at London Metropolitan University in May 2010.

If, however, the issue were only that of the size of a polity, then it would be merely a technical problem. A speculation on a possible technical advancement in the field of information and communication technologies as well as constitutional changes of existing democracies, changes enabling widespread political participation, is neither new nor entirely utopian (see e.g. Qvortrup 2007). No matter how difficult it is for a proponent of the Aristotelian conception of the politics of the common good to imagine such widespread deliberation, its possibility should not be entirely ruled out. Similarly the fact that public deliberation is not practiced face to face in the modern liberal state (as was the case in Ancient Greek city-states or is sometimes the case in relatively small local communities) should not be seen as the most essential problem. And this is not least because rational deliberation can occur and indeed does occur in a variety of other forms such as, for example, via email. Therefore in the manner of Aristotle's conclusion in the first book of *Politics,* when Aristotle argues that the *polis* is both quantitatively and *qualitatively* different from the household and the village, it is reasonable to conclude that MacIntyre's claim of shared deliberation and the common good is impossible at the level of the liberal nation-state because of the substantive structural problems rather than because of its size. These substantive structural problems and the relationship between the politics of the modern state and the politics of the common good will concern the remainder of this paper.

MacIntyre's own answer to the question of the relationship between the liberal nation-state and the economic order of global capitalism, on the one hand, and the politics of the common good, on the other, is the position of communitarian protectionism and/or collective self-defense. By "communitarian" here I do not mean the communitarianism of Amitai Etzioni or of Charles Taylor, something that MacIntyre himself, as mentioned above, has repeatedly rejected. Rather it means that it is through the construction and protection of local practice-based communities that the Aristotelian politics of the common good so conceptualized can be sustained.

What MacIntyre argues in *DRA* and, more recently in his London lecture "Two Kinds of Political Reasoning", is that leaders have to engage in alliance building and bargaining with a variety of interest groups and political parties to protect the political communities of the common good and to secure needed resources for local political communities. Such a position requires proponents to engage with the modern state on its own terms; that is, it should be conceptualized not using Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, but in terms of rational choice theory and game theory. This, so it would seem, is to engage with the modern state in the way that it becomes intelligible in terms of preference maximization without any serious attempt at making these preferences rationally intelligible to the party with which one engages or aligns. The preferences of a local community become one set of interests among other preferences of other interest groups. Pushing a step forward, we can say that MacIntyre's protectionism demands the leaders of local communities, in exceptional cases, to become Machiavellian in their dealings with the political and economic institutions of advanced modernity.

Aristotle on Virtue and Legislation

If MacIntyre claims to follow Aristotle's political philosophy, then it is important to examine how Aristotle understands the relationship between ethics and politics, in particular the relationship between virtue and legislation. It will be instructive because both virtues and the common good on Aristotle's account are intimately linked to legislation – *nomothetike*, i.e. the science of legislation.[6] It has been rightly argued several times (e.g., Kraut 2002) that the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which, in a narrower sense, is the study of everything "having to do with the character (*ethos*)", has to be read together with the *Politics*, and that the *Ethics* should be read before the *Politics*, despite the fact that, most likely, the *Ethics* was written after the *Politics* (*ibid.*: 16). The *Ethics* discusses what the human good and virtues are, while the *Politics* is mostly preoccupied with the different types of political constitutions and what the best *polis* is about. Yet in a wider sense Aristotle considered both of them to be *politikē* (political science and/or politics), the enquiry into *eudaimonious*-living, both for individuals and for the *polis*. As such, the distinction between ethics and politics was not something Aristotle himself considered as philosophically significant; on the contrary, he saw his ethical enquiry as essentially political (*ibid.*). This, as I will argue, is significant as it allows us better to understand the importance of ethics for legislation and *vice versa*.

That ethical enquiry is political is evident from Aristotle's conceptualization of *arete.* In the second book of *Nicomachean Ethics* he states that the nature of moral virtue is *ethos* as it results from habituation. Virtue is a state of mind that requires rational choice and is accompanied by feeling pleasure when hitting a mean between access and deficiency. So it is a state with regard to pleasure and pain when rationally choosing a right kind of action in different situations. Repeatedly choosing a mean produces a good habit, and so one becomes habituated in virtue. We can conclude that there are three essential elements to the nature of virtue: the state of mind accompanied by pain or pleasure, rational choice (attitude), and habituation.

I want to focus on the relationship between rational choice and habituation. Much later, Aristotle argues that once our habits are formed and we are accustomed to act in one way or another, the scope for free rational choice becomes very small to the extent that when, for example, a bad habit is fully formed, no rational deliberation or rational argument, no knowledge of what is right, can undo it. Furthermore, the habituation in vices or in virtues also affects our attitudes and the way we look at human conduct and the social structures within which they are received and supported. Thus habituation in virtues or vices always takes place within a certain social context of existing norms. The latter also contribute to directing and forming our habits at least in an obvious sense that we learn to act in one or another way through following others – first our parents, then our teachers, colleagues, friends, etc. Aristotle calls the context of social norms, customs, written and unwritten laws *nomoi*.

[6] It is important to bear in mind that *nomothetike* is both "science" *and* the actual activity of law-making. Aristotle's practical philosophy is "science" directed towards a right action, including political action, thus it is fully actualized when people engage in law making.

Richard Kraut argues that *nomos* (law) and lawfulness (*nomimos*) have to be understood in a much wider sense than we, moderns, understand law and lawfulness (*ibid.*: 105). Law is much more than existing written laws, while lawfulness, one of the two key characteristics of justice, is more than being a law-abiding person. *Nomos* includes laws, norms, and social mores, even people's beliefs about what is fitting and binding – in short, everything that gives stability and *good* order to a given society. One of the reasons why Aristotle puts so much emphasis on laws, lawfulness, and legislation is precisely because *nomoi* have an intimate relationship to virtue: laws direct our actions, and good laws direct them well, i.e., they habituate us to virtue.

It is for this reason that Aristotle conceptualized justice in the widest sense as *nomimos* – lawfulness – as it is only through right kind of laws and right kind of legislation that a just society is possible. Now the claim that justice is lawfulness, as Kraut rightly argues, is not a conservative claim (that is, it is not the claim that one must abide by existing *nomoi* no matter what they are or in order to preserve the existing order). Rather, as it is with almost any other of Aristotle's concepts, it should be understood in teleological terms. *Nomos* can be called *nomos* if it functions as the law *should* function. That is, it should promote the common good. Furthermore, it is through *nomimos* that Aristotle chooses to conceptualize justice as a comprehensive virtue. Good laws demand citizens to act virtuously in every situation: to be courageous in battle when defending one's city, temperate when distributing material resources equally to others, and to oneself, etc. Thus, at the very end of *Nicomachean Ethics,* Aristotle concludes:

> But if one has not been reared under the right laws it is difficult to obtain from one's earliest years the correct upbringing for virtue, because (…) the young, do not find it pleasant to live temperately and with endurance. For this reason, their upbringing and pursuits should be regulated by laws, because they will not find them painful once they have become accustomed to them. (Aristotle 2004: 1180b)

Aristotle continues saying:

> he [a man concerned with virtue] will be better able to do this if he has the chance of legislating, because care at the public level is evidently demonstrated through laws, and good care through good laws. (*Ibid.*: 1181a)

So the importance of legislation, one of the key elements of *politikē* (the science *and* the art of politics), is essential in sustaining the politics of the common good. "Law has compulsive power" and it is law, according to Aristotle, that is better suited to *correct* those who lack virtues, since people hate when someone commands against their impulses and desires, but they are able to take laws easier because "there is no oppressiveness in the law's prescribing what is good" (*ibid.*: 1180a).

Critical Assessment: Local Community, the State and Global Capitalism

It appears then that anyone who follows the Aristotelian conception of politics and political community should recognize the essential importance of legislation in our attempts to build and sustain political community. There is no doubt that Alasdair MacIntyre is aware of this. He has

repeatedly argued that local communities can flourish only if they are able to resist the centralizing power of the modern state (MacIntyre 1995, 1999, 2007). It follows, then, that the best way to achieve such flourishing is to attain as much autonomy for local (political) communities as possible, so that political communities possess as much legislative power as possible. Now even if this were desirable (it is indeed a big question whether it is), it is certainly not the direction in which the societies of advanced modernity are moving. If anything, the centralizing power of the state has increased and is still increasing. Certainly, it has been the case at least as far as the minimal legal provisions of basic civil rights are concerned.

The negative aspects of centralization cannot be denied – two of which include an ever-expanding bureaucracy *and* the increasing distance between governing elites and the rest of ordinary people. Yet, provisions for minimal health-care, education, and other important public goods can only be universally provided through deeper integration and centralization and not through the withdrawal of the state. Furthermore, the argument in favour of more autonomy is not convincing because other important public goods such as the minimal social-order and security, free and equal access to decent primary, secondary and even university education can also only be provided by a more extensive rather than a smaller state. On the other hand, giving away more legislative power to local communities would necessarily mean a greater fragmentation of the social body and possibly greater differences and inequalities between different communities. So the poorer and less educated local communities are more susceptible to all the communitarian ills of which MacIntyre himself is so critical: narrow minded parochialism, xenophobic sentiments, abusiveness towards minorities, etc.

Of course, it does not follow that MacIntyre's conception of the politics of communal self-defense exhibits these ills, but it is easy to see how his position can be read in this way, including in terms of Reagan-like neoliberal rhetoric of "rolling back the frontiers of the state". Such a reading would be a disastrous mistake because it would kill any aspects of emancipation and emancipatory politics prevalent in MacIntyre's political philosophy.

Therefore, I want to propose (to argue so would be the task of another paper) that what is needed at this stage is not so much to reclaim the legislative power for local communities, but for local communities to take an active role in the political process of law-making. Such a diagnosis is meant to challenge the dominant way of thinking and doing politics by revitalizing the theoretical tradition of emancipatory politics as it is understood in broadly neo-Marxist terms, a tradition in which we are enjoined to engage in progressive struggles in order to reclaim at least some influence within existing political institutions.

Numerous studies and critical analyses over the past decade have consistently shown that the growing economic disparity caused by the project of neoliberal globalization has been detrimental not only to the worst off and the middle class, but to the whole of the economy (Gray 1999, Stiglizt 2003, Harvey 2005, 2009, Chomsky 2012). Financialization and neoliberal

deregulation have made the economic system more unstable, far more prone to crises than previously imagined. It is within this system whose major players – corporations – have become legal persons obliged by law to maximize profit at the expense of all other considerations such as the quality of goods, safety, health, environment and other societal issues (Bakan 2004). From the point of view of Aristotelian practical philosophy, the economic rationality of profit maximization is irrational. It is based on limitless acquisitiveness, something which Aristotle called the vice of *pleonexia*.

Pleonexia is closely related to *chrematistike* – the art of acquisition not for the sake of sound *oikonomia*, the household management, but for the sake of acquisition as such. Divorced from the aims of ethical life – acquiring wealth in order to use it for the sake of one's individual well-being (hence the acquisition of wealth is and should be always limited by the virtue of *sophrosune* (moderation) as well as by the natural limit of how much one can consume) and in order to sustain the structures of the common good – *chrematistike* necessarily serves *pleonexia* as something which is directly opposite to justice. Aristotle used "*pleonexia*" in two ways. In a narrow sense, it is an economic vice of both wanting more wealth than one deserves while gaining wealth and power at the expense of others. More generally, *pleonexia* refers to an undeserving sense of superiority over others when acquiring such external goods as money and honour (Kraut 2002: 138-145). There cannot be any doubt that the productive system of advanced capitalist economies has institutionalized *pleonexia* as its key internal driving force[7].

This is especially evident if we look at the capitalist production from the point of view of Karl Marx's (1990) theory of surplus value. Even if we reject Marx's conclusions (and there are very good reasons to reject at least some of them), his theoretical insight that the source of surplus value is the control of surplus labour time is essential for any serious theoretical attempt to consider what should constitute just economic relationships. Even if we accept the business owner's right to a portion of surplus value generated by wage labour (as I think we should in order to account for the risk, the initiative, and the original creative idea of the business owner), the massive differences between surplus labour time working men and women spend generating surplus value for owners, on the one hand, and the necessary time they spend working in order to earn their wages, on the other hand, are extreme and obvious in the majority of "successful" capitalistic corporations.

It is this difference that is at the core of capitalist exploitation. Exploitation can be conceptualized in the following way. Let us call it the Exploitation Calculus (EC). It is designed to show the level of the exploitation of labour in a given company functioning in a capitalist economy. The concept of EC is based on Marx's distinction between necessary working-time or simply necessary labour (NL) and surplus labour time (SL). In the first volume of Marx's *Capital* (1999) NL is the portion of a work

[7] For a more detailed, yet similar, philosophical argument on the institutionalization of *pleonexia* in capitalism see Ruth Groff (2012).

day that a wage earner works in order to earn his/her wage. SL is the remaining part of the work day that the worker works to generate surplus income (including profit) for the owner. Let us assume that, in perfect market competition, the value of a commodity is equivalent to its price.

I propose, then, the following rationale to calculate EC. First, assuming that income is generated by selling a company's commodities in the market, a company's annual income (minus constant capital (CC), i.e. the costs of raw materials plus the cost of the exploitation of the means of production plus investment) is divided by 52 weeks to calculate the Company's Income per week (CIw). Second, the total number of employees (NoE) should be multiplied by 40 hours (assuming that a worker works 8 hours 5 days a week) to calculate the total Hours Worked (HW) by/ in the company. Third, to calculate hourly productivity, that is generated Income per Hour (IpH), we need to divide CIw by HW (i.e. IpH = CIw/ HW). Fourth, surplus value per week (SV), expressed in a given currency (e.g. Litas), is CIw minus the Sum of Real Wages per week (SRW is the sum of the real wages per week of all a company's employees). Fifth, Surplus Labour time (SL) equals SV divided by IpH, while Necessary Labour time (NL) is SRW divided by IpH. EC then is the ratio between SL and NL, or SL / NL. The higher the proportion of SL per day, the higher exploitation there is. When the ratio is 1, it means that SL and NL are equal (4 hours each, assuming that a normal working day is 8 hours). When EC is close to 0, there is virtually no exploitation. Conversely, when EC moves closer towards SL, approaching the length of a full working day, the closer it gets to absolute exploitation[8]. To check the correctness of this formula, each individual case SL plus NL should equal HW.

To illustrate the exploitation calculus, let us presume that there are 458 employees working in the Company X.[9] Let us also assume that the average salary of an employee is 5378 litas a month (or 1344.5 litas a week) while the annual income (excluding constant capital) of Company X is 321.8 million litas. Company X's income per week (CIw) then is 6.188 million litas (i.e. 321.8 / 52). The total hours worked in/ by the company per week is 18 320 hours (458 x 40). The hourly productivity of labour, that is to say the income generated by labour per hour (IpH), is approximately 337.79 litas (i.e. 6.188 million / 18 320). Surplus value per week (SV) then is 6.188 million litas minus 615 781 litas (615 781 is the Sum of Real Wages per week (SRW), that is, 1344.5 litas multiplied by 458 employees), which equals approximately 5.572 million litas. Surplus labour time per week (SL) is 16497.074 hours (i.e. 5.572 million / 337.79). Necessary labour

[8] It is important to note that the ratio between surplus labour time per week (SL) and necessary labour time per week (NL) can be expressed on an individual worker's 8 hour working day scale only if SL and NL is divided by the total number of employees and then by 5 days. Absolute exploitation is to be understood as work without any salary, which would be a form of slavery. In a capitalist economy, unless it is voluntary work, absolute exploitation is not possible (it would be robbery). This impossibility is in fact expressed mathematically as well: when SL amounts to a full working day and NL is 0, EC – the ratio between SL and NL – does not make sense.

[9] Although the figures below are meant to be hypothetical, they are taken from an actual Lithuanian company. The most difficult variable to assess by the general public is constant capital.

time per week (NL) then is 1822.926 hours (615 781 / 337.79). The correctness of this calculation lies in the fact that SL and NL per week adds up to the total of 18 320 hours. The expression of SL and NL on the scale of an individual worker's 8 hour working day is 7.2 hours to 0.8 hours (SL/458/5 to NL/458/5), that is 7 hours 12 minutes of surplus labour time to 48 minutes of necessary labour time. Thus the Exploitation Calculus (SL/NL) in this case is approximately 9. The average worker in the company X, therefore, spends at least 9 times more time to create surplus value for the capital owner as compared to the time needed to earn his/her salary.

To conceptualize and measure the levels of exploitation is important as it indicates that necessary changes cannot be advanced on the local level only. The members of local (political) communities are, in one way or another, subjected to the power of global markets, which function on the basis of profit maximization. Thus the members of MacIntyrean and/or Aristotelian local communities are either compelled to pursue profit and act against the virtue of *sophrosune* (even if they are in the lowest management positions of any business organization); or, if they are wage earners, subjected to the ruthless dictum of profit maximization on a daily basis. Institutionalized global markets are all-pervasive, and their corrosive power towards local communities cannot be overestimated. The Aristotelian political praxis to protect and sustain the forms of political life that are based on the genuine common good must be directed towards this source of institutional coercion.

A viable tool for countering the power of the market turns out to be the state, i.e., the institution that has the power to pass laws. One of the pressing tasks of such emancipatory political praxis would be to dismantle the legal personhood of corporations and to make them accountable to the democratic public. At the level of philosophy, virtue ethicists must articulate a better theory of what an alterative economy should be about, an economy which is not based on the notion of unjust appropriation of surplus value at the expense of ordinary working men and women. Any theory of social economy of this kind would have to reject the notion of the dominant idea of self-interested profit maximizing agency (be it a firm or a consumer), and would have to be rooted in an Aristotelian anthropology broadly understood. At the center of such an anthropology would be the idea that the structures of the common good are essential for human flourishing. Of course, these positive changes will be impossible without the boldness of genuine theoretical and political insight. Thus, to paraphrase Alasdair MacIntyre, what we are waiting for is not a Saint Benedict, but for another – doubtless very different – Marx and another Saint Paul.

Conclusion

MacIntyre's post-*After Virtue* work, especially his *Dependent Rational Animals*, provides us with an outstanding theoretical account of an alternative Aristotelian social ontology which is at odds with the dominant conception of human life as driven by the narrow conception of preference maximization. Its central claim is that because individual human life is marked by physical and mental vulnerability, a flourishing human life cannot be lived without the

political structures of the common good. MacIntyre's critique of the liberal democratic state as being unable to provide us with the political structures of the common good is convincing in both theoretical and practical terms. The modern liberal state, as it was convincingly argued in the past (Rawls 1971, 1996), is not and cannot be based on the single conception of the common good. Furthermore, MacIntyre is right to argue that the actual practice of the politics at the level of the state has nothing to do with normative considerations *a la* Rawls since what ultimately matters is the bargaining power of each interest group involved. What is less convincing is his claim that the only chance to survive "the new dark ages" is through "the construction of local forms of community." Our engagement with Aristotle's conception of virtues and the key role legislation plays in acquiring them was designed to illustrate that the politics of Aristotelian local communities is bound to be unsuccessful in their attempts to uphold "morality and civility" unless the irrationality of the limitless capital accumulation is challenged at the national and global levels.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aristotle, 1998. *Politics* (trans. C. D. C. Reeve). Indianapolis, Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company.

Aristotle, 2004. *Nicomachean Ethics* (trans. R. Crisp). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bakan, J., 2004. *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*. New York, Toronto: Free Press.

Bielskis, A., 2008. Teleology and Utopia in Alasdair MacIntyre's Ethics and Politics. In: *Sociologija: Mintis ir veiksmas*, p. 48–59.

Chomsky, N., 2012. *Occupy*. London: Penguin Books.

D'Andrea, Th. D., 2006. *Tradition, Rationality and Virtue: the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre*. Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate.

Gray, J., 1999. *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism.* London: Granta Books.

Groff, R., 2012. Aristotelian Marxism / Marxist Aristotelianism: MacIntyre, Marx and the Analysis of Abstraction. In *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Issue 38-8.

Harvey, D., 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, D., 2010. *The Enigma of Capital*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kuna, M., 2010. *Etika a politika v perspetive Alasdaira MacIntyra*. Ružomberok: Katolicka universiteta v Ružomberku.

MacIntyre, A., 1995. *Marxism and Christianity*. London: Duckworth.

MacIntyre, A., 1998. Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good. In: Kelvin Knight, ed. *The MacIntyre Reader*. Cambridge & Oxford: Polity Press.

MacIntyre, A., 1999. *Dependent Rational Animals.* London: Duckworth.

MacIntyre, A., 2007. *After Virtue* (3rd ed.). Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

MacIntyre, A., 2008. What More Needs to Be Said. A Beginning, Although Only a Beginning, at Saying It. In: K. Knight and P. Blackledge (eds.). *Analyse & Kritik*. Stuttgart: Lucius & Lucius.

Marx, K., 1990. *Capital. Vol. I.* London: Penguin Classics.

Murphy, M. C., 2003. MacIntyre's Political Philosophy. In: M. C. Murphy, ed. *Alasdair MaIntyre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lutz, Ch. S. 2009. *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre*. Oxford & New York: Lexington Books.

Knight, K., 1996. Revolutionary Aristotelianism. In: I. Hamphsher-Monk & J. Stanyer (eds.). *Contemporary Political Studies*, vol. 2. Political Studies Association of the United Kingdom.

Kraut, R., 2002. *Aristotle: Political Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Qvortrup, M., 2007. *The Politics of Participation: From Athens to E-democracy.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Rawls, J., 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.

Rawls, J., 1996. *Political Liberalism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Stiglitz, J. E., 2003. *Globalisation and its Discontents.* London & New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

ALASDAIRO MACINTYRE'O VEIKALO „PRIKLAUSOMI RACIONALŪS GYVŪNAI" TEIGINIŲ POLITINĖS IMPLIKACIJOS

Andrius Bielskis

S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje analizuojami svarbiausi Alasdairo MacIntyre'o veikalo *Priklausomi racionalūs gyvūnai* teiginiai. Jame teigiama, kad, nepaisant MacIntyre'o pateikiamos įtikinamos alternatyvios aristoteliškos socialinės ontologijos ir bendrojo gėrio politinių struktūrų sampratos, jo akcentuojama bendruomenių protekcionistinė politika yra abejotina, jei aristoteliškos politikos šalininkai neturi galimybės pasipriešinti besaikei kapitalo kaupimo galiai. Straipsnyje taip pat yra aptariama Aristotelio dorybės samprata, o sykiu įstatymų leidybos reikšmė ugdant dorybes. Remiantis Karlo Marxo skirtimi tarp būtinojo ir pridedamojo darbo laiko, straipsnyje pateikiama eksploatacijos skaičiuoklės formulė.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: Alasdairas MacIntyre'as, *Priklausomi racionalūs gyvūnai*, bendrojo gėrio politika, Aristotelis, dorybė, emancipacija, globalus kapitalizmas, eksploatacijos skaičiuoklė.

Įteikta 2012 06 09