Whose Revolution? Which Future? The Legacy of Alasdair MacIntyre for a Radical Pedagogy in Virtue

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Most readers of Alasdair MacIntyre do not take him to be a revolutionary. If one reads only his works from the past thirty years, one might easily categorize him as a conservative. No doubt due to his sustained critique of modern liberalism, many of those labelled today as neoconservatives have embraced this ersatz version of his thought.[1] Yet as becomes clear in his most recent book, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre's Aristotelianism and his critique of liberal moral theory are not rooted in a reactionary longing for a golden-age past.[2] They derive, on the contrary, from his deep engagement with that bane of all economic and moral conservatives, Karl Marx, and his interest in Marxist revolution.

Of course, MacIntyre is no "vulgar Marxist." Instead, his work stands as revolutionary in its own way. As Walter Benjamin once wrote, amid unleashed and overwhelming capitalism, revolutions may be more like an attempt "to activate the emergency break" than to launch history forward.[3] As we narrate in §1 below, there can be no doubt that we all now live in a time of capitalism run out of control. Thus, to resist the new brand of nihilism emerging from capitalism's unceasing stream of "creative destruction" will require new ways forward that are nothing short of radical.

MacIntyre, we suggest, might just be the revolutionary we need. Or, to be more precise, the counter-revolutionary. In this article, we argue that at the heart of MacIntyre's work is not a template for visions of isolated communities of restorationist reactionaries. Rather, he points us toward a radical pedagogy dedicated to the creation of thickly-engaged communities of virtue capable of resisting the fragmenting, isolating, and vicious forces of capital. To make this case, we bring MacIntyre into conversation with others who share this vision, in particular Paulo Freire, and we connect MacIntyre's agenda with the creation of communities of practice, as prototyped by the base communities of liberation theology. In conclusion, we argue that what MacIntyre has sought so thoroughly to develop over the entire course of his career is a moral theory capable of sustaining a revolutionary alternative to the alienating and dehumanizing operations of capitalism located in the basic elements of shared concrete practices. Thus, virtues are the elements of a

radical praxis of freedom, a freedom that counters the imperialism of the capitalist, liberal state through the collective practice of a self-possessed, unified ethical life.

To make this argument, we first describe the social impact of capitalism, particularly in its latest, most aggressive neoliberal version. We then revisit MacIntyre's Marxist roots and his sustained critique of capitalism as a way of illuminating what he takes to be the deeper problem with liberalism and its correlative ethic of expressivism. Finally, we connect MacIntyre's thesis to the radical pedagogy of Paulo Freire and the examples of base communities in order to contend that communities of practice epitomize the kind of ethical and tradition-based revolution at the heart of MacIntyre's project.

1. Cultural Dissolution, Moral Irresolution: The Fruit of Neoliberalism's Silent Revolution

As we move toward the quarter mark of the Twenty-First Century, our society lurches at an ever-increasing pace toward a dystopian order under the late twentieth-century ascendance of neoliberalism. Termed "the silent revolution" by Oxford economic historian Avner Offer, the fragmenting and deconstructive effects of this new, distinctive, deeply disseminated rationality came into its own around 1980. While it has vastly increased the wealth of the few—wealth on the level the world has likely never seen before—for the many, it has mostly left a path of destruction in its wake.[4] Insofar as it has also profoundly permeated our social, individual, and moral infrastructures, neoliberalism has invisibly and profoundly shaped the self-understanding of the students who sit in our classrooms, the infrastructure of their families and their futures, and increasingly the discourse and policies of the colleges and universities in which moral theologians and philosophers seek to transmit traditions of moral inquiry.

A number of contemporary theorists have charted the economic, social, psychological, and cultural effects of neoliberalism, chief among them David Harvey, Wendy Brown, Naomi Klein, and Wolfgang Streeck.[5] Bruce Rogers-Vaughn summarizes some of these effects succinctly in his important book, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age.* Drawing on Robert Putnam's 2015 analysis of the impacts of neoliberalism on Port Clinton, Ohio, entitled *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Rogers-Vaughn details the corrosive effects of neoliberal ideology and its attendant growing economic inequality on class, communities, families, and education in the United States.[6] Just a few of those effects include: a decline in manufacturing jobs from roughly 50% to 25% of total employment in a short period of three decades; a gradual decline in real wages; longer

commutes to replace lost wages, stressing families and fragmenting communities; a doubling to quadrupling of the divorce rate depending on location; a jump in childhood poverty rates from 4% to 35%; increasing class segregation; declining educational levels; declining social mobility; and marked increases in juvenile delinquency.[7] This social fragmentation has been attended by extraordinary increases over the past forty years in rates of mental illness,[8] opioid addiction,[9] suicide,[10] and suddenly, after rising for decades, a three-year decline in life expectancy due to increasing mortality rates for middle-aged persons.[11]

For Rogers-Vaughn, these effects are due not only to the direct economic effects of neoliberalism—i.e., the increase in economic hardships for most people and rise in economic inequality—but as importantly to the socio-cultural commitments embedded in the neoliberal framework, particularly what he names deinstitutionalization, desymbolization, and desubjectification. Centered in extreme individualism, neoliberalism seeks the dismantling of cultural institutions (such as public schools, universities, government, or churches) as well as collectives that nurture interpersonal relationships.[12] Equally, neoliberal culture erodes and flattens any symbolic language, images, or values that "have the ability to resist those of the market."[13] Finally, neoliberalism desubjectifies persons, leading to what Christopher Bollas has named the "normotic personality," indicating "an individual [who] suffers a numbing or erasure of subjectivity, experiencing herself as a commodity in a world of commodities."[14]

What is more, with the ascendency of cultural capitalism, the production of culture itself, from movies and music to literature, child-rearing, and marriage are increasingly commodified and individualized. Social fragmentation and dissolution of civic participation have been well described by sociologists like Robert Putnam, Robert Bellah, Daniel Bell, and Theda Skocpol.[15] Broad atomization has resulted in the decline of membership in civic and broader social institutions as well as severely weakened the social bonds that knit a society together. Work is more unstable and more fluid. Social relations become more virtual; social bonds less enduring. Churches, unions, local clubs, and all other social organizations are on the decline, even as tertiary associations (political mailing lists or online communities) and lifestyle enclaves expand.

Is it coincidence or prescience, then, that the first edition of MacIntyre's *After Virtue* appeared in 1981? Here MacIntyre prophetically adds to the above landscape an abiding concern with the epistemic crisis of the late-Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries. On the cusp of the socio-cultural fragmentation detailed above, MacIntyre boldly named the already-unfolding

fragmentation underlying an emergent cultural reality: the irresolvability of moral disputes. In the memorable opening pages of *After Virtue*, MacIntyre echoes the science-fiction novel *A Canticle for Liebowitz,*[16] asking his reader to imagine a situation where the field of science has been entirely destroyed, disbanded, and prohibited. Those trying to revive the tradition have only fragments, lacking any unifying theory to make sense of their significance or how they integrate. As a result, "arbitrariness" dominates the field due to the fact that no agreed upon premises give shape to the remnants of fragmented scientific expressions.[17]

MacIntyre reprises this scenario to propose what was at the time his radical thesis:

> The hypothesis I wish to advance is that in the actual world which we inhabit the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder as the language of natural science in the imaginary world which I described. What we possess […] are the fragments of a conceptual scheme […]. We possess indeed *simulacra* of morality […]. But we have—very largely, if not entirely—lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality.[18]

Thus, interminable dispute pervades our moral discourse; any possibility of rational agreement has vanished.

In the place of ethics, our discourse is now entirely shaped by emotivism, the theory that "all moral judgments are nothing but expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling," and therefore cannot be either true or false.[19] As such, differences between moral perspectives cannot be resolved rationally—i.e., through a mutual process of face-to-face discussion that entails giving reasons that stand "independent of the relationship between speaker and hearer."[20] Rather, moral disagreement devolves into little more than assertion and counter-assertion, a mere clash of arbitrary wills that can only be resolved, in the end, "by producing certain non-rational effects on the emotions or attitudes of those who disagree with us"—in other words, through various exercises of power, such as manipulation, legal action, or bureaucratic processes that identify who can decide.[21] As such, contemporary moral discourse is, in effect, little more than managerial technocracy or Nietzschean will-to-power. MacIntyre offers as the only real alternative Aristotelian virtue theory cultivated through practices—namely, those "coherent and complex form[s] of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that

form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human concepts of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended."[22]

As bleak as the landscape seemed when he penned the first edition of *After Virtue*, over the last forty years, the social state of moral discourse has devolved even further. In 2016, MacIntyre returns to these themes in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*. Here, he opens not with a description of culture and moral discourse catastrophically fragmented. Instead, he posits a different problematic, that of "lives that go wrong on account of misdirected or frustrated desire."[23] Depicting a number of scenarios that echo the fragmented, despairing lives Rogers-Vaughn describes, MacIntyre zeroes in on the moral paralysis or despair experienced by so many. Again, he suggests, emotivism—now renamed "expressivism"[24]—has a choke-hold on the moral self-understanding of those in Western culture. Yet to dislodge expressivism's grip, in this text he takes a different tack from that of *After Virtue*, granting to desire a critical role in moral reasoning and moral action while continuing to argue that Arisotelian virtue theory—now renamed NeoAristotelianism—provides a better account of the role of desire in moral reasoning.

Chasing an Aristotelian-styled inquiry, beginning with everyday questions at hand and proceeding through various stages of justification for his position, MacIntyre lays out a case for a NeoAristotelian alternative to the defective histories and limitations of expressivism. For our purposes, three aspects of this account are most pertinent. First, the development of moral agency, for MacIntyre, requires the cultivation of *prohairesis*, the term used by Aristotle to designate "desire informed by reason or […] reason informed by desire."[25] The tension between desire and reason generates the intertwined questions, "What do I want?" and "What do I do?"—pressing self-conscious beings to question the genesis of our desires and if they are really our own.[26]

Secondly, here reason has a particular shape—it is associated with the determination of objective goods. For MacIntyre, moral action is the result of acting rationally, that is, to act with a good reason or, in other words, "for the sake of achieving some good or preventing or avoiding some evil."[27] As reason is informed by the desire for the good, equally, rationality must shape desire into the full maturity of virtue through practice. This iterative, recursive, never-ending process not only develops ethical discernment, or *phronesis*, as one of the cardinal virtues of the person, but also allows her to learn and progress as a moral agent over the course of her life.[28]

What distinguishes the virtuous person, within an Aristotelian perspective, then, is not merely that she does the right thing, but that she does the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason, in the right way, with rightly formed desires or affections.

Thirdly, this is never an individual pursuit or process. In fact, what makes humans peculiar kinds of animals is that we are social creatures possessing unique capacities to alter and transform our environment. For Aristotle, this unique power is essentially encapsulated in the human capacity for language, *zoon logon echon*. Not only does language give us the unique capacity for reflection, this unique human ability to communicate makes possible deeper and more complex forms of collaboration and association and, critically, the mutual identification and pursuit of common goods.[29] The tense structure of language also provides for the possibility of envisioning alternative futures. This allows humans to set goals and embark on mutually shared objectives, creating expectations of one another as well as leading to a sense of satisfaction or disappointment with the eventual outcomes.[30] Finally, language offers a vehicle through which to recount stories about lives, the challenges faced, the accomplishments achieved, the failures endured, and the endeavors taken. Such narratives offer a greater extent of personhood.[31] Enabling a distinct form of collective life, linguistically comprised communities are necessary for growth and formation in virtue, providing a platform for identifying mistakes and what can be learned from them. Thus, collective life, for NeoAristotelians, becomes an extended enquiry into how best to live, or, a dilated argument in pursuit of truth and good.[32]

MacIntyre's NeoAristotelian view, accordingly, poses a full-throated critique of contemporary moral theory. The "Morality" that at present prevails in modernized societies, for MacIntyre, is one based on profoundly misguided premises and fictional concepts: predominantly, utility and human rights.[33] Thus, despite the gains that may have been made for certain groups, the basic presuppositions of this ethical system carry an insidious genetic deformity that renders the system as a whole incoherent and corrupted.[34] In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre notes suggestively that this deformity must have been rooted in a catastrophic social event—except that, surreally, in the case of moral discourse, the precipitating cataclysm was not recognized as such. In fact, from the standpoint of academic history, the event "must remain largely invisible."[35] It is only in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* that MacIntyre brings it fully into view. That insidious flaw is, we discover, the possessive individualism of capitalism traceable to its tumultuous emergence in the Eighteenth Century.

2. The Destructive Forces of Capitalism: MacIntyre as Anti-Anti-Marxist

Harking back to some of his earliest writings, in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre returns to Marx to unveil the socio-economic and political conditions that gave rise to emotivism. As he argues, people did not all of a sudden—sometime between 1630 and 1850—discover that they had feelings or lose the function of their rational faculties. Rather, the emergence of expressivism, and the shift away from an Aristotelianism that had held sway in Western culture for the better part of two millennia, was the result of a larger social shift. This transformation was catalyzed by the introduction of powerful forces in the late 1700s that altered the entire culture, reconfiguring human interactions, thought, and moral considerations.[36] While in *After Virtue* MacIntyre largely narrates this shift almost entirely via the influences of various philosophers and their thoughts and arguments, in *Ethics at the End of Modernity*, he finally tells the other half of the story—in fact, the most important half. Here he zeroes in on the real culprit behind the catastrophic transformations of "modernity" for ethics: the unparalleled force of capitalism.

MacIntyre proceeds in two steps. In the first, he more closely examines the work of eighteenth-century empiricist philosopher David Hume, the progenitor of all expressivists. While Hume figures in the narrative of *After Virtue*, in the present volume MacIntyre digs deeper, unmasking a critical and often overlooked aspect of Hume's work. Hume's position originates from a utilitarian logic that reductively equates good with pleasure and evil with pain, rejecting the Aristotelian distinction between objects that merely attract and those that are ultimately good.[37] Any greater ends or goods which may not exactly pique immediate desire or titillate one with pleasure are discarded. In a deft sleight of hand, Hume then asserts that pleasure and pain as the content of good and evil provide a universal—and universally agreed upon—structure for morality. This general and universal agreement in sentiments and affections, for Hume, precedes the standards societies derive for moral action and practical reason.[38] Per his empiricism, his ethics proceeds as a cataloging of habits, sentiments, and affections natural to humankind. These provide the universal code of morality.

But was it? MacIntyre notes how radically Hume's account differed from the account of morality that had held for centuries, in which human virtue and flourishing were deeply interwoven with both individual and common goods necessarily achieved through specific social roles, the local political order, and contextual relationships.[39] Such a position continued to be held by many

in Hume's context, particularly by those in different social classes, who accounted very differently for desires, sentiments, and more importantly goods.[40]

What is more, MacIntyre unveils Hume's subtle bias toward wealth. He highlight's Hume's essay "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," where Hume simply asserts a correlation between pleasure or positive desires and riches, stating: "Avarice, or the desire of gain, is an universal passion, which operates at all times, in all places, and upon all persons."[41] Or, as MacIntyre continues:

> In his *Treatise [on Human Nature,* Hume] had asserted that "Nothing has a greater tendency to give us an esteem for any person than his power and riches," and he had explained "the *satisfaction* we take in the riches of others, and the *esteem* we have for the possessors" by referring first to the possessions of the rich "such as houses, gardens, equipages" and the like, which "being agreeable in themselves, necessarily produce a sentiment of pleasure in everyone, that considers or surveys them," secondly to our "expectation of advantage from the rich and powerful by our sharing of their possessions," and thirdly to "sympathy which makes us partake of the satisfaction of everyone, that approaches us."[42]

As MacIntyre notes further, whenever Hume comments on economic questions, be it progress that has been made from less sophisticated agricultural societies to his contemporaneous commercial, mercantile context, it appears that "there is rarely a hint that the continuing and growing prosperity of the rich and powerful has invited anything other than the applause and approbation of the less prosperous."[43]

In other words, not only does Hume conflate pleasure/good and pain/evil and then blithely assert that desire for gain is "natural" and that wealth is universally perceived as a source of positive sentiments, he then subtly embeds economics at the heart of his moral system. In presenting a decontextualized, yet highly peculiar, account of putatively "natural" and "universal" morality, Hume at best fails to acknowledge the import of his own social context and location on the very theory of morality he promotes. Even as he promotes it as universal common sense, Hume's moral theory arises within a specific context—namely, the eighteenth-century British social and economic order—and bears all the trappings of that social location.[44]

MacIntyre then zeroes in on a key point:

> What I am suggesting is not only that some of Hume's claims were mistaken, but also that one effect of his advancing them in the way that he did was to conceal and disguise from his readers the importance of certain facts about the condition of their social and economic order […]. [His supposedly universal morality] functioned so as to conceal from the view of many of his contemporaries the underlying moral and social conflicts of their society and by doing so sustained the workings of the agricultural, commercial, and mercantile economy to the profit of the some and to the detriment of others, others who are for the most part invisible to Hume.[45]

In other words, from the outset, modern moral theory was engaged in a process of concealing and disguising its role in supporting and sustaining the radically new social and economic institutions that emerged in Britain in the latter part of the Eighteenth Century and continued to morph in increasingly destructive ways since. In doing so, Morality veils as much as it informs, providing an ethical patina for the social processes of a regnant capitalism. Based on the frail tethers of a fabricated consensus, from Hume and Kant to Mill, Gibbard, and ultimately Rawls, modern ethics, for MacIntyre, is plagued by a degenerative and disorienting ailment, a condition that leads in the end to a Nietzschean will-to-power. Thus, not only does expressivism perpetuate fragmentation and un-ending moral disagreement. It is equally unable to acknowledge its own socio-historical conditioning, ill-equipped even to see the force of capitalism as a socio-cultural power that shapes its basic commitments. But not only is it *unable* to see these dynamics—it also simultaneously conceals, veils, and disguises them. For expressivism is, by design and from its inception, the moral theory capitalism requires, enabling this economic mutation to function invisibly, inexorably, insidiously.

For MacInytre, the theorist who can best help us see these dynamics is Karl Marx, or at least the Marx of the first volume of *Capital*, whom MacIntyre views as following an Aristotelian trajectory.[46] In *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre makes his lifelong indebtedness to Marx all-the-more evident by dilating on three essential components of the current situation to be learned from Marx. First, Marx's theory of surplus value exposes the exploitative nature of capital as an accumulative regime. For MacIntyre, following Marx, deception is at the heart of capitalism.

It is "a mode of presentation of relationships that disguises and deceives," one of the main deceptions being the theory of surplus value.[47] "Surplus value"—that fiction by which capitalists generate profits—is nothing other than "unpaid labor" (a.k.a., theft). But this fact is concealed from the laborers:

> those whose labor power had thus become a commodity did not recognize themselves as, and even now generally do not recognize themselves as, having become in this respect commodities to be exchanged for money, to be bought and sold at whatever rate the relevant market dictates. They thought and think of themselves in quite other ways and understandably so […]. The relations of exchange through which those who own the means of production appropriate the unpaid labor of productive workers are disguised by their legal form as the contractual relations of free individuals, each of them seeking what she or he takes to be best for her or himself.[48]

As such, secondly, capital reshapes moral anthropology and our understanding of society—how people have to learn to think about themselves and their relations to others if they are to act in accordance with the operations of capital. That is, Marx uncovers how capital disciplines its denizens for participation in the market.[49] In order to understand the emaciated ethics that pervades modern societies, one must grasp the complete system of dissimulation that characterizes capitalism, depleting and displacing the true goods of life and wizening politics.

Thirdly, for MacIntyre, following Marx, a critique of the field of economics and the education it provides is essential. Capitalism is not merely the organizing structure of one isolated segment of human existence; rather, its dominant logic, anthropology, and view of social relations legitimate its expansion into all areas, solidifying it as an entire, ordered way of life.[50] As a result, MacIntyre's critique of modern liberalism sees the processes of capitalism—as well as the theories and theorists that legitimate these processes and disseminate its rationality—to be deeply at odds with the kinds of goods intrinsic to the development and practice of the virtues. Beyond its "completely Weberian" composition, capitalist society can only foster an anemic morality.[51]

While philosophical critique of these dynamics is essential, MacIntyre again points us beyond a simply philosophical solution. As Kelvin Knight contends,

The conclusion to which MacIntyre was moving, and to which he had already long been moving as a Marxist, was that Nietzschean theory and capitalist practice had to be opposed in the name not of some theoretical or future ideal, but of some actual and present kind of practice.[52]

And for MacIntyre, practice can only be embodied in communities. He notes in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* that, to counter the moral theories of Hume and others, any challengers had to present "not just an alternative body of theory, but the possibility of an alternative way of life to the capitalist way of life."[53] But he had likewise stated this as early as 1960:

The individual then cannot win his freedom by asserting himself against society; and he cannot win it through capitalist society. To be free is only possible in some new form of society which makes a radical break with the various oppressions of capitalism.[54]

Thus, the answer lies not in philosophy alone but in a revolutionary *praxis* borne out in ethical communities joined in their desire for the higher goods and emancipated to pursue those shared ends.

3. MacIntyre, Radical Pedagogy, and New Communities of Practice

All along, then, the question for MacIntyre with his turn to virtue has been: "So in what direction should radical critiques of capitalism move?"[55] Or, better, in a state of "capitalist unfreedom," how do we cultivate the "revolutionary discipline" needed to achieve freedom?[56] At the end of *After Virtue*, he can see his first attempt at an answer, though as through a glass darkly. As he now famously stated there, recalling the historic events of the sixth century:

A crucial turning point […] occurred when men and women of good will turned aside from the task of shoring up the Roman *imperium* and ceased to identify the continuation of civility and moral community with the maintenance of that *imperium*. What they set themselves to achieve instead—not often recognizing

fully what they were doing—was the construction of new forms of community within which the moral life could be sustained […]. What 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 which are already upon us.[57]

In 1981, MacIntyre gestured vaguely toward a new, "but doubtless very different" St. Benedict. This has led prominent religious conservatives to martial MacIntyre's thought in support of proposals for founding new enclaves marked by social isolation and retreat from contemporary culture. Insofar as these proposals call for a *very similar* St. Benedict, they proceed on poor readings.[58]

Rather, as Knight has demonstrated, what lies at the heart of MacInytre's entire oeuvre is a sustained commitment to Marx's notion of "revolutionary practice."[59] Thus, while MacIntyre's philosophy is Aristotelian, as Knight notes, he is not interested in conserving political order as was Aristotle, but with how to change and transform it.[60] MacIntyre's notion of politics is one of active teaching and learning, not irrational dominance. "Politically, locality is important," Knight comments, "because it can afford participation in rational deliberation and decision-making to all."[61] The ultimate goal of MacIntyre's ethical philosophy, then, is to provide a moral theory for the Marxist pursuit of overcoming the alienation, fragmentation, exploitation, dehumanization, and social disfigurement that come with capitalism.

In *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, MacIntyre makes more explicit what valid sorts of challenges to capital's Morality might look like. Contrary to orthodox Marxists who have privileged party power and the revolutionary working class as agents of social change, creating a false binary between institutions or spontaneity, he sides more deliberately with the English Distributists whose Thomistic precepts, articulated through the work of Leo XIII initiating the tradition of Catholic social thought, gave view to "a series of genuinely local political initiatives through which the possibilities of a grassroots distribution and sharing of power and property could be achieved."[62] Against the total depravity capitalism engenders across all layers of society, MacIntyre sees such micro-political experiments as necessary for the resurrection of virtue and the reconstruction of human flourishing.

MacIntyre is joined in this conclusion by other critics of neoliberalism.[63] But while these figures all gesture toward new local experiments in community or collectives as the answer, none talk about how to begin building such entities. In this section, we offer one practical, pedagogical way to do just this. We argue that MacIntyre's impressionistic trajectory toward social practices cultivated among local communities should be read in consonance with the kinds of "base communities" associated with Freirean radical pedagogy and action. Such communities of practice inculcate new collective visions of the good while building power and taking account of the experience of those oppressed by the regnant system.

MacIntyre himself seems to be grasping at this conclusion when he argues in his 1995 "Preface to *Marxism and Christianity*":

> In this situation [of global capitalism] 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.[64]

What MacIntyre calls for, in essence, are local, transformative, and educational communities of practice. Rather than a statist focus, which may have characterized his earlier Marxian views, MacIntyre's mature thought looks to the creation and sustaining of local ethical communities where collective identity and meaning derived from emancipatory self-activity in pursuit of a real common good can be conducted.[65]

In substance, MacIntyre's project dovetails well with twentieth-century Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire, who stressed the need to generate radical educational communities of *praxis*. Born in 1921 in Recife, Brazil, Freire was no stranger to the poverty and misery of the region. He came of age during the fallout from the 1929 Great Depression, which threw his own middle-class family into destitution. Thus, his experience of living under social, economic, and political domination and oppression led him to the field of education as a critical site for the struggle of liberation. Only eight years MacIntyre's senior, he too was deeply influenced by Marxist thinkers of the time and took his doctorate in education at the University of Recife in 1955. The focus of his life's work was the development of a radical pedagogy for those on the bottom of

society, aimed at learning *with* them in direct engagement with the concrete realities of their oppression in order to liberate them and together to transform their world.[66] He describes this radical program for education in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, a work that, as we will demonstrate, shares many similarities and overlaps with MacIntyre's own project. Moreover, we contend, Freire's philosophy of education provides a way of generating the kinds of critical, alternative communities of practice aimed at transformation that MacIntyre's virtue ethics seeks to promote.

For Freire, the essence of this revolutionary work is to foster dialogical action.[67] Dialogue here is not uninterested discourse, or remote communication over sustained distance, or hostile argument. Rather, it is the forging of a collective rationality and consciousness through the development of deep relational connections. Distinguished from the monological postures that pervade situations of domination wherein "some name on behalf of others," dialogue for Freire "is an encounter among women and men who name the world […]. [I]t is an act of creation."[68] He continues, "Dialogue cannot exist […] in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people," because, as an encounter of "united reflection and action," dialogue moves to transform a dehumanizing and oppressive structure in order to make it more human and fulfilling.[69] In the same way that MacIntyre despises the reign of managerialism, Freire too sees such top-down, professionalized modes of learning as inherently problematic. What Freire adds to MacIntyre's more philosophical argument is a mode of pedagogical encounter for not only building the skills to engage in the sort of moral discourse MacIntyre seeks, but also for creating and building the kinds of transformative communities that cultivate identity, purpose, shared rationality, and common goods.

Nowhere is this more evident than in Freire's connection to and investment in Catholic ecclesial base communities (*comunidades eclesiales de base*). Challenging a church establishment (even in its modernizing version) that was unwilling to critique or break with the status quo, Freire's close relationship with the "red bishop" Dom Hélder Cámara and the radical Columbian priest Camilo Torres set him on the side of peoples' movements which embraced and utilized his problem-posing and dialogical approach.[70] As a result, he also deeply influenced the liberation theologies emerging at the time, shaping the involvement of clergy (Catholic and Protestant) in their engagement with *campesinos* (or working people) of their towns and villages. These local communities gathered in a Freirean-mode of learning practice to constructively challenge the hierarchy and socio-political

exploitation of the capitalist state all across Latin America. And it was in concert with these communities that a whole network of ecclesial base communities arose. Gathered to pray and to reflect upon and discuss Scripture as well as new social thought documents coming out of Vatican II, the participants in these communities sought to forge a new society of justice and freedom consolidated in their shared identity and mutual pursuit of shared goods.[71]

Following Freire's radical curriculum, these base communities worked against the shaping forces of a capitalist state and its mode of domination. First, they resisted the deep fragmentation and isolation inherent in the individualizing dynamic of capitalism. They did this by presenting an alternative: communion in dialogue, where "sharing something deeper" gave rise to the possibility of "common action" based in a deeply relational, shared ethical identity.[72] Second, such a community required the capacity to reason together about crucial human goods, that is, to cultivate a shared rationality through the process of "conscientization" (*conscientização*) aimed at practice and action. In this way, knowledge was deepened and grew through a co-investigatory process of radically democratic education.[73] Thus, finally, not only did communities consolidated in such a way learn to address the economic, social, and political realities they faced and to discard the fabulations of oppressive exploiters, but they did so in a way that forged a shared identity in an ethical community capable of cultivating shared goods and virtues.

Over and against forms of education that merely reproduce the status quo in the service of the dominant regime by silencing, manipulating, and dividing the oppressed, Freire argues for a form of dialogical pedagogy that instills critical consciousness and builds cultural action between teachers and the people as the road to revolution. While the former is anti-dialogical, Freire puts forth a radical mode of pedagogy that moves cooperatively, based in an ongoing dialogue with the people that begins from their experiences, helps them to begin to problematize the given, and works together to build a unified pursuit of an alternative way of life.[74] Dialogue rejects dehumanization and begins the movement toward liberation in communion.

On this central tenet, MacIntyre and Freire deeply overlap. It is not incidental that for Aristotle, and thus for MacIntyre, education is at the heart of virtue. A society structured by virtue requires a people educated and formed to engage in the politics of the good. But too often contemporary virtue theorists—many of whom claim to be MacIntyrean—forward a conservative mode of education. Indeed, MacIntyre himself may be responsible for this due to his extensive focus on mentorship and apprenticeship. Too frequently, apprenticeship calls to mind the forms of

education, even when practical or technical in nature, that Paulo Freire memorably labeled "banking."[75] A set compendium of knowledge known by the instructor is recited to the student, who passively accepts the knowledge and later regurgitates it. Such forms of knowledge tend toward paternalism, hierarchy, and stasis and are better fitted for crafts than instilling the knowledge of ethics.

As such, these approaches are incapable of forming students in the skills of rationality, virtue, and ability to advance fundamental human and social goods through shared practices. MacIntyre, of course, registers this. Indeed, the whole of MacIntyre's work, as Romand Coles has suggested, points to the centrality of "contingency, conflict, difference, heterogenous traditions, and a version of dialogical enlightenment and politics."[76] One may even see the similarities in the structure of MacIntyre's argument in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, wherein he begins by questioning what is presumed and then proceeds to chart a conversational path toward the ultimate question of what does it mean to live well. MacIntyre's appeal to tradition and reason is neither Descartes's pure geometry nor Hegel's end of history, but instead recognizes that the heart of a community of virtue is continuous argument and deliberation.[77] To quote Coles again:

> [MacIntyre's] hope is that if we can initiate spaces, sensibilities, and practices through which to cultivate particular traditioned rationalities and genuine contestation here, these might (through numerous political struggles) eventually spread to the public sphere and throughout society.[78]

Thus, for MacIntyre, as for the oppressed subjected to domination, the problem is monological uniformity that denies the pursuit of more ultimate, if contested, goods.

MacIntyre tends to envisage the Catholic university as an ideal space for recovering this dialogical practice.[79] But traditional university structures as well as their contemporary neoliberalized deformations mount significant barriers to his project. Moreover, given their self-enterprising and transitory nature, engrafting university students into base communities remains challenging. Yet we believe a contemporary possibility for advancing a MacIntyrean mode of revolution requires collaborative, participatory experiments that bridge academic and community divides with the aim of reconsolidating alternative forms of local life. Just such a Freirean educational approach can provide a means for generating the kinds of micro-political experiments

necessary if we are to introduce students to and thereby cultivate the sorts of ethical communities to which MacIntyre gestures.

Mary Ann Hinsdale, Helen Lewis, and Maxine Waller recount an example of such experiment in their documentation of a five-year (1987–1992) community development process in Ivanhoe, Virginia.[80] Charting the story of a small, rural community in the Appalachian mountains, they offer an account of "the creative survival techniques that people developed" as they faced the post-industrial decline of their town and the emerging socio-economic pressures associated with the expansion of neoliberal capitalism.[81] Beginning with community education and problem-posing inquiry, the experiment in Ivanhoe brought academics and community members together in a process of participatory research aimed at rebuilding their community and transforming their situation. With the aim of reconstituting Ivanhoe's way of life, they recognized that this goal could not be achieved through professional techniques of planning but must come by way of "people development and community building: education, building self-esteem, understanding history, mobilizing people in all their diversity."[82] They describe the effort, no less, as springing from the formation of an "Appalachian base-community."[83]

While the Ivanhoe community continues to struggle to define its own future, we suggest that this kind of micro-political experiment provides an example for the kind of community reconsolidation and transformation central to both Freire and MacIntyre. Even more, working at the base of American society through a process of participatory and collaborative education, Ivanhoe provides a tangible example of how communities of practice (CoPs) embody the kind of radical pedagogical relationships between academics and local communities necessary for staving off the corrosive and corrupting tides of aggressive capitalism and transforming the teaching of ethics.[84] Let us quickly highlight four ways that this communities of practice approach responds to MacIntyre's insights on *prohairesis*, community, virtue, and social change.

First, *proharesis* stands at the center of communities of practice. CoPs acknowledge the legitimate role of desire. For Freire, such participatory modes of learning engage the desires of those involved in a shared process of consciousness-raising that enlivens their aspirations, identifies where those aspirations are being frustrated or negated, and then activates a social mode of learning to enact the needed changes. But they also help practitioners (community members, students, *and* faculty) move beyond simple emotivism or expressivism. Springing from a problem-posing origin, CoPs draw practitioners into the pursuit of knowledge aimed at a shared good.

Through co-creative, participatory inquiry, they recursively bring practitioners' desires into an intentional, rational, analytical relationship with those goods. This not only moves practitioners beyond solipsistic understandings of desire. Further, as MacIntyre notes, "To discover what we share with others, to rediscover common desire, is to acquire a new moral standpoint."[85]

Second, CoPs by their very nature begin to rebuild community in a variety of ways. They train practitioners in a constellation of constitutive core practices requisite for establishing a shared venture. Facilitating the social production of knowledge, basic practices of dialogue and discussion allow participants to negotiate insights and differences while developing shared rationalities for the essential practices of their community. These ethico-political practices iteratively deepen community. When configured in Freirean fashion, this cooperative inquiry fuses conscientization with the kind of relationship-building needed for the practice of a shared way of life and the collective theorizing inherent to it. Within such communities, people discover the power they have to work from their own knowledge and to engage in their own research, thus activating them together to pursue higher, common goods.[86]

Third, as is already evident, the social activity of learning conducted within such CoPs advances the growth of virtue in practitioners by involving them in the communal pursuit of excellences of practice. Whether it be literacy training, Scripture reading, prayer, developing sustainable farming practices, or generating micro-economic alternatives, CoPs involve participants in the active inquiry necessary for performing such endeavors well. As collaborative learning groups, CoPs intertwine the various experiences and competencies of both academics and community members in a mutual process of refinement, adjustment, and even change that begins to build a social fabric capable of sustaining that knowledge and practice.[87] And when set as Freirean-informed base communities, they move from the people up, generating the changes needed to make these virtuous practices possible and enduring without succumbing to stale and rigidly uniform bureaucratic structures.[88]

Finally, via CoPs, participants also embark on the longer-term task of challenging the pervading structures of capitalism and the managerial state by generating ethical social alternatives. In other words, CoPs work to build the kind of socio-ethical relations necessary to pursue a collective good and sustain that pursuit over time. Marx taught that real freedom is the deepest challenge to capitalism. Like any imperial regime, capitalism thrives on the backs of its captives, growing its accumulation on their stunted and immiserated lives. Freirean-informed CoPs aim to alter this

structure through the intentional activation of the base of this disfigured society, deploying a radical pedagogy of consciousness-raising that moves these communities out of passive silence and into the communal process of building their own ethico-political alternatives.[89] Against the fragmentation, atomization, dehumanization, deinstitutionalization, desymbolization, and desubjectification wrought by neoliberal capitalism, Freirean-informed CoPs provide a collective mode of socio-cultural transformation wherein those subjected to exploitation and the captivity of capitalism can begin to redefine and reconfigure their world. Thus, they can function as radical Monte Cassino-like outposts in a struggle of education against the inculcation of neoliberalism's principles and logic.

4. Revolutionary Pedagogy for a Twenty-First Century Ethics

Communities of practice are the kinds of elemental social learning systems where an alternative, even revolutionary, way of life can be cultivated and performed. While not nearly as comprehensive as those envisaged by MacIntyre and Freire, these embryonic communities of practice offer a starting point for students and faculty to begin to learn the practices and habits necessary for reshaping pedagogy, themselves, and their communities toward new forms of society that can counter the oppressions and fragmentations of capitalism they both name as the root of our current social and moral malaise. Based in the conviction that learning is a social phenomenon, communities of practice are the kinds of participatory units wherein new identities are forged.[90] They "can be thought of as shared histories of learning" that provide new possibilities of collective identity.[91] As sites for the cultivation of "revolutionary discipline," they can function as a radically new approach to teaching ethics by seeding the recovery of virtue, the conscientization of participants, the pursuit of freedom, and the rebuilding of community, toward the end of real social change. Creating time for such micro-politics, for tending to the goods of humanity, for cultivating lives worth living, they offer the opportunity of slowing things down, possibly giving enough space for us to re-collect our history from its currently headlong trajectory into the dead end of global capitalism.

When set within a Freirean radical pedagogy, these kinds of basic social learning systems become radically democratic arenas for the cultivation of the kinds of virtues and prophetic witness called for by MacIntyre.[92] To Freireans, thus, MacIntyre's work on virtue could be a helpful guide for building up the communion so central to their common pedagogical project, even as Freire's

emphasis on dialogue might refine the hierarchical interpretations of MacIntyre's valorizing of apprenticeship. Both, in parallel and, we think, in ways that deeply overlap, seek "a new kind of society rooted in the centrality of a better humankind," consonant with the Catholic commitments they share.[93] Both believe education is not neutral, and therefore, hope to inspire communities of practice hat challenge the status quo and pursue transformation. Freire offers a method to MacIntyre's substance: a participatory pedagogy for the cultivation of virtue.

Both are revolutionaries of a peculiar kind. Theirs will be a slow revolution, not a decisive and catastrophic break. But if we do not wish merely to replace an order (or disorder) of fragmentation and sheer competition with a new one of more of the same, we will need the time to cultivate in our students the skills for building community, shaping an alternative rationality, and cultivating the correlative human virtues so as to capacitate them to reprise these processes more permanently wherever they go. And as we teach, so will we be taught, as this new approach to pedagogy holds the promise of radically reshaping how faculty inhabit our own universities and communities— capacitating us to be not only those who create new knowledge, but those who likewise catalyze and engage in social change. True revolution, after all, means revolution for everyone.

Notes

1. Some prominent examples of conservative misappropriations of MacIntyre include Rod Dreher, host of *The American Conservative* blog and author of *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation* (New York: Sentinel Press, 2017); R. R. "Rusty" Reno, editor of *First Things*; and the *New York Times*'s columnist Ross Douthat.

2. Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

3. Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, 1938–1940, eds. Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 2003), 402.

4. Bruce Rogers-Vaughn, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016)*,* 8, citing Chris Hedges, *Wages of Rebellion* (New York: Bold Type Books, 2015), 76–80. No doubt a contested term that many have suggested lacks precision, we use "neoliberalism" to name an ideology and rationality that envisions the market as

unknowable and yet remarkably powerful for organizing ever-increasing aspects of human social and individual life. Identifying this otherwise invisible assemblage of state, corporate, finance, and market powers is an essential first step to dethroning it, we believe, and thereby worth the risk of some imprecision.

5. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, NY: Zone Books, 2017); Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Picador, 2007); and Wolfgang Streeck, *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (New York: Verso, 2014).

6. Robert D. Putnam, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015).

7. Rogers-Vaughn, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age,* 8–14.

8. Per Robert Whitaker, *Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2010), mental illness rates have doubled since 1987 and increased six-fold since 1955. See: https://www.counterpunch.org/2010/04/28/the-astonishing-rise-of-mental-illness-in-america/.

9. Sarah DeWeerdt, "Tracing the U.S. Opioid Crisis to its Roots," *Nature* September 11, 2019, https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-02686-2. For another localized narrative that ties many of these themes together, see Nicholas Kristof, "Who Killed the Knapp Family?" *New York Times*, January 9, 2020, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/09/opinion/sunday/deaths-despair-poverty.html.

10. From 1990 to 2007, suicide rates in the U.S. increased 33%, now ranking as the second leading cause of death for 10–34 year-olds and the fourth leading cause of death for people ages 35–54. See Kirsten Weir, "Worrying Trends in U.S. Suicide Rates," *Monitor on Psychology* 50.3 (March 2019): 24, https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/03/trends-suicide.

11. Linda Carroll, "U.S. Life Expectancy Declining Due to More Deaths in Middle Age," *Reuters* November 26, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-life-expectancy/us-life-expectancy-declining-due-to-more-deaths-in-middle-age-idUSKBN1Y02C7.

12. Rogers-Vaughn, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age*, 124.

13. Ibid. Rogers-Vaughn quotes here Edward Farley's book, *Deep Symbols*: "What appears to be new in postmodern societies is not a displacement of old symbols for new ones but a weakening if not elimination of all words of power. All deep symbols now appear to be imperiled by postmodern discourses, societal traits, and sociologies of knowledge […]. But with the loss of the words of power, quaintness applies to all such terms: thus 'tradition,' 'duty,' 'conscience,' 'truth,' 'salvation,' 'sin,' 'God.'" See *Deep Symbols: Their Postmodern Effacement and Reclamation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 13–14.

14. Rogers-Vaughn, *Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age*, 2, citing Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 135–156.

15. See Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Robert N. Bellah, et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2008); Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 20th Anniversary Edition (New York: Basic Books, 1996); and Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).

16. Alasdair MacIntyre *After Virtue*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 1–5; and Walter M. Miller, *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (New York: J.B. Lippincott and Co., 1959).

17. *After Virtue*, 1.

18. Ibid., 2, emphasis added.

19. Ibid., 11–12.

20. Ibid., 9.

21. Ibid., 11–12.

22. Ibid., 187.

23. Ibid., 1.

24. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 59ff.

25. Ibid., 38; and Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, book VI.

26. Ibid., 1–4.

27. Ibid., 8.

28. Ibid., 38–40.

29. Ibid., 26.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 26–27.

32. Ibid., 32.

33. Ibid., 77. For MacIntyre, rights are moral fictions rife with contradictions and insufficiently rational to establish substantive claims. As he argues in *After Virtue*, while rights are presented as universal properties, they in fact emerge within a very specific historical and social context. Thus, just as with utility, this theoretical formulation is nothing but an unsuccessful attempt to rescue the "autonomous moral agent from the predicament in which the failure of the Enlightenment project of providing him with a secular, rational justification for his moral allegiances had left him" (68).

34. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 77–78.

35. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 4.

36. For an in-depth and insightful account of this transformation, see Michael Perelman, *The Invention of Capitalism: Classical Political Economy and the Secret History of Primitive Accumulation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

37. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 79.

38. Ibid., 80.

39. Ibid., 82.

40. Ibid., 82–83.

41. Ibid., 82.

42. Ibid., 82–83 (emphasis in original).

43. Ibid., 83. In his extended discussion of Hume in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), MacIntyre provides a much more extensive analysis of the economic commitments underlying Hume's moral theory. He notes how Hume reduces justice to the protection of property and how the moral psychology he provides to ground his accounts of the foundational virtues and vices (pride, humility, love, and hatred) are shaped by possession-based social standing. As MacIntyre notes: "*Pleonexia* has at last made a social world for itself to be at home in, acquiring for

itself that esteem that *timē* once conferred. Hume's values and the values of that English and anglicizing society for which Hume speaks represent a striking reversal of what as recently as the latter part of the Seventeenth Century has been inculcated in Scottish universities through the reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*. And that reversal could not have occurred without the social and economic changes of Karl Polanyi's 'great transformation.' But it could not have been presented in an intellectually cogent manner without Hume's elaboration of a radically new way of conceiving both the relationship of reason to the passions [reason being now the slave of the passions] and the nature of the passions" (313).

44. Hume, of course, was not alone in this. MacIntyre traces the same patterns in Adam Smith, finding that these similarities "suggests that their absence [of any conception of economic activity as capable of being cooperatively and intentionally directed toward the achievement of common goods, as Aristotle and Aquinas understood them] was a matter of the general culture share by Hume, Smith, and those educated contemporaries in Scotland, England, France, and the Netherlands who were their readers and who provided the political, mercantile, commercial, and academic leadership of their societies. They shared a way of life which no longer had any place for that conception or that thought. So the sentiments that Smith and Hume catalogue and describe with such care and wit are in part not sentiments shared by all humankind, but sentiments praised and cultivated by eighteenth-century commercial and mercantile humankind and often enough by their present-day heirs" (*Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 92). Some, however, have argued that Smith was not as bad as Hume in this regard, maintaining that he, in fact, should be considered the "last of the virtue ethicists." See, e.g., Deirdre McCloskey, "Adam Smith: The Last of the Former Virtue Ethicists," *History of Political Economy* 40.1 (2008): 43–71; Samuel Fleischacker, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Adam Smith's Moral and Political Philosophy," https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/smith-moral-political/; and Jeffrey P. Bishop, M. Therese Lysaught, and Andrew Michel, *Chasing After Virtue: Neuroscience, Economics, and the Biopolitics of Morality* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, forthcoming).

45. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 84, 85. MacIntyre makes clear how Hume's position differs from contemporary emotivism in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (300–

307), but insofar as Hume has become the forebear of all emotivists, finding this in his philosophy is critically important. More intriguingly, here MacIntyre deepens his account of Hume's tendency toward concealment and disguise (if not outright duplicity) both with regard to his relationship to religion and as to his identity as a Scot. MacIntyre narrates how Hume avowed hostility to religion both in private and in his published writings while "in social life he presented a different front" (282). He also details Hume's strenuous attempts to Anglicize his life and identity, even crafting his anonymously published *A Treatise of Human Nature* to give the impression that its author was English (283–284).

46. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 94.

47. Ibid., 95.

48. Ibid., 97.

49. Ibid., 96.

50. Ibid., 102–105.

51. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 109. Readers who are familiar with this important text will recognize that MacIntyre makes this statement at the beginning of the central chapter in the book. *Sans* a collective view of the common good and a positive vision of freedom, MacIntyre asserts there are only two possible ways forward for a society trapped within the "iron cage" of management and bureaucracy that has filled the void left by the absence of these unifying goods: Nietzsche or Aristotle.

52. See Kelvin Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy: Ethics and Politics from Aristotle to MacIntyre* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 126. Initially a member of the Communist Party and then a son of the New Left movement in England following on the heels of Vatican II and the 1968 uprisings, MacIntyre's entire project is deeply informed by the works of Marx, even as his growing affinity for Aquinas has put him more and more at odds with Marxists. One can follow this development of his thought in Paul Blackledge and Neil Davidson, eds., *Alasdair MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism: Selected Writings 1953–1974* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009).

53. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 98. As he further notes: "Capitalist investment combined with technological invention to produce industrial revolution after industrial revolution, developing productive capacities and powers and raising standards of living as it did so. But it also, as Marx had observed and predicted, destroyed or

marginalized traditional ways of life, created gross and sometimes grotesque inequalities of income and wealth, lurched through crisis after crisis, creating recurrent mass unemployment, and left those areas and those communities that it was not profitable to develop permanently impoverished and deprived" (100).

54. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Freedom and Revolution," in *MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism*, 130.

55. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 107.

56. MacIntyre, "Freedom and Revolution," 131.

57. MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 263.

58. Dreher is only the most recent of these. In his book *The Benedict Option: A Strategy for Christians in a Post-Christian Nation*, he presents the image of the Benedictine monastery as a place of refuge and tradition in the face of a degenerating society and culture. Beyond the thematic connection, however, there is little overlap between Dreher's project and that of MacIntyre. Dreher not only misunderstands the metaphor and the connection between tradition and virtue for MacIntyre, but even more, he profoundly misreads the context in a way that, maybe intentionally, elides any of the Marxist critiques of liberal society so intrinsic to MacIntyre. Set next to MacInytre's *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, the difference cannot be missed. While both MacIntyre and Dreher appeal to an image of Benedict, the important questions remain: which Benedict—the monk of Nursia whose created new possibilities for Christian community at Monte Cassino (MacIntyre), or the reform at Cluny which consolidated power via hierarchy and consolidation of the legal code (Dreher)? Thus, the option Dreher delineates really never is an option. In fact, MacIntyre might say that the idea of this "option" is itself an extension of the capitalist logic and framework that shape so much of society. After all, Dreher's community of retreat may be just another, more intense, lifestyle enclave. More generally, the conservative cooptation of MacIntyre fails to recognize the revolutionary register for his practical rationality. Captured by a culture wars framework that only tangentially touches on the contradictions of capitalism (usually in the form of the hypersexuality that comes with commodification or the excessive materialism associated with conspicuous consumption), readers like Dreher utterly fail to grasp the deeper critique of the capitalist

state so integral to MacIntyre's view, in part because they are simultaneously in thrall to the god of capitalism.

59. Knight, *Aristotelian Philosophy*, 122.

60. Ibid., 3.

61. Ibid., 180.

62. MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflict of Modernity*, 108.

63. For example, for Rogers-Vaughn, the first step in countering the corrosive effects of neoliberalism is to enable people to find their voice, to tell their story, to tell their narratives. This not only helps them move beyond the isolation imposed by commodified individualism; it also helps to rebuild the fabric, "the living human web," in which we all are embedded. In other words, effective therapy requires the transformation of pathological sociopolitical structures. When it comes to how to do this, Rogers-Vaughn comes to the limits of his vision. He argues for "the cultivation and strengthening of collectives" (*Caring for Souls in a Neoliberal Age*, 208), perhaps even "religious collectives" (220), but precisely how to move forward remains undefined. Additionally, one of the most prominent appropriations of MacIntyre's work has been by the theological ethicist Stanley Hauerwas. Yet, while Hauerwas offers a vision of the church as just such an alternative community, he does not discuss how to get such a community of the ground. See his *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

64. Alasdair MacIntyre, Preface to *Marxism and Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1995), xxvi.

65. Through his engagement with Marxism, MacIntyre's thought matured and he came to realize that, *pace* Marx, advanced capitalism did not lead to the solidarity of the working class but to further fragmentation. Hence, party politics with their center of gravity lodged in the state were doomed to failure and, indeed, only served to increase the managerial and bureaucratic tendencies of the capitalist state. See Blackledge and Davidson, "Introduction: The Unknown Alasdair MacIntyre," in *Alasdair MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism*, xxxviii.

66. Richard Shaull, Foreword to Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos, 30th Anniversary Edition (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 30–

31. See also James D. Kirylo and Drick Boyd, *Paulo Freire: His Faith, Spirituality, and Theology* (Boston: Sense Publishers, 2017), 3–4.

67. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 160.

68. Ibid., 89.

69. Ibid., 88–89. While Freire's framework of radical pedagogy has at times been harnessed to the statist projects of intellectual-activists (some of whom were his conversational partners), his embrace of Marxism, like MacIntyre's, was not a full embrace of the notion of party and the framework of the state. See Gerard Huiskamp, "Negotiating Communities of Meaning in Theory and Practice: Rereading *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as Direct Dialogic Encounter," *Counterpoints* 209 (2002): 73–94.

70. James D. Kirylo, "Chapter Seven: Liberation Theology and Paulo Freire," *Counterpoints* 385 (2011): 172–173.

71. Ibid., 178–179.

72. Cristóbal Madero, S.J., "Theological Dynamics of Paulo Freire's Educational Theory: An Essay to Assist Catholic Educators," *International Studies in Catholic Education* 7.2 (2015): 126–127.

73. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 106.

74. See ibid., especially chapters 3–4.

75. Ibid.*,* 72.

76. Romand Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics: Reflections for the Possibility of Democracy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 80.

77. Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*, 89; and MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 206.

78. Coles, *Beyond Gated Politics*, 95.

79. MacIntyre, *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2011), particularly chapter 19. MacIntyre is keenly aware of the way capitalism has misshaped the contemporary university. And he calls for Catholic universities in particular as the descendants of a thicker philosophical tradition, to recover within themselves—through the reorganization of their curricula—a commitment to such an alternative program. Increasingly, however, it would seem that Catholic universities have only succumbed to the neoliberal models of education described by Wendy Brown in *Undoing the Demos*,

specifically chapter 6. Further documentation of this trend was offered recently in an article published by David Sessions, "How College Became a Commodity," *Chronicle of Higher Education* January 14, 2020.

80. Mary Ann Hinsdale, Helen M. Lewis, and S. Maxine Waller, *It Comes from the People: Community Development and Local Theology* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995).

81. Hinsdale, et al., *It Comes from the People*, 1.

82. Ibid., 333.

83. Ibid., 302.

84. While his notion is wider and more inclusive, we draw the language and conceptual development of communities of practice (CoP's) from Etienne Wenger. For a more thorough discussion, see Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

85. MacIntyre, "Notes from a Moral Wilderness," in *MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism*, 65.

86. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 86.

87. Wenger, *Communities of Practice,* 10–11.

88. For more expanded discussion of the activities and sociology of Freirean-informed base communities, see Daniel H. Levine, *Popular Voices in Latin American Catholicism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992) and Johannes P. Van Vugt, *Democratic Organization for Social Change: Latin American Christian Base Communities and Literacy Campaigns* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991).

89. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 66–67.

90. Wenger, *Communities of Practice,* 3–4.

91. Ibid., 86–87.

92. Kirylo, "Chapter Seven," 184ff.

93. Madero, "Theological Dynamics of Freire," 122.