

## PRESENTATION

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EVEN from the perspective offered by the distance of many years of history, it is difficult to determine the speed and depth with which the great philosophers contributed to epochal change by transforming human self-understanding within culture. Only a few written fragments remain of the first philosophers. It took more than a millennium for the work of Aristotle to effectively penetrate the West, and then his work was only accessible to a few and by means of Latin translation. The dissemination of the manuscript transcriptions of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* was arduous, slow, and, in most cases, of only a small fraction of that work which he wrote with the aim that it would be read as a single, united, and systematic text.<sup>1</sup> While the limits of technology rendered arduous the transmission of ideas and culture in comparison to the ease of today's cybernetic technology, those same difficulties also effected a selective filter so as to accentuate the reception of many of the true treasures of intellectual achievement. Unlike the past's difficulties for determining the impact of a great thinker, today's challenge is one of selection.

Alasdair MacIntyre, who turns 90 in 2019, is recognized as one of the top ten most cited living philosophers.<sup>2</sup> And, at least for now, his prominence is without the advantage of a public Google Scholar page, used by many authors to advance their professional acknowledgement and to attract citations. It is ironic that while not seeking such quantifiable dissemination of his own work, he began his most famous book, *After Virtue*,<sup>3</sup> by referring to an apoca-

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<sup>1</sup> See Leonard Boyle's analysis of the very limited reception of Aquinas' thought until the sixteenth century: L. E. BOYLE, *The Setting of the Summa Theologiae of Saint Thomas*, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, Toronto 1982, and *Facing History: A Different Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 13, Brepols Publishers, Turnhout 2000.

<sup>2</sup> See B. LEITER, *The 85 (or so) Most Cited Living Philosophers with Public Google Scholar Pages (CORRECTED)*: <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2015/05/the-most-cited-living-philosophers-with-public-google-scholar-pages.html> (posted on 29/5/2015, accessed 17/06/2019).

<sup>3</sup> A. C. MACINTYRE, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame (IN) 2007, 3rd ed. According to Brian Leiter, *After Virtue* is the fifth most cited anglophone philosophy book published since World War II. See B. LEITER, *Most-cited*

lyptic scenario inspired by a science fiction novel wherein a culture had been mostly lost due to violent destruction and only small and unintelligible fragments remained. Today the abundance of written texts, along with recorded video, that encompasses the vast secondary scholarship on MacIntyre's work can paradoxically obscure the discovery of the genuine depth of impact on the scholarly community and on culture as a whole.

MacIntyre's impact on students, colleagues, and friendly adversaries in dialectical exchanges over the course of his long and prolific life is surely much deeper than what the mere number of citations might seem to indicate. Due to the breadth and depth of his work, from politics, to sociology, to ethics, to university design, and well beyond, he has effected an impact that has generated personal conversions, much like those depicted in his highly influential article *Epistemological Crises and Dramatic Narrative*<sup>4</sup> published during the middle of his career. Some of those grateful for MacIntyre's philosophical production have gathered from across continents, united by MacIntyrean inspiration and the interest to pursue his subversive and, at times, revolutionary, promotion of a dynamic and living tradition of enquiry. For example, the *International Society for MacIntyrean Enquiry* (ISME) is one of those groups that dialectically and vivaciously pursues MacIntyre's challenge, directed towards all institutions, to seek the common good of the communities of which they are composed rather than themselves as their own end.<sup>5</sup> At ISME gatherings, Marxists and Thomists join in philosophical discussion and jovial celebration. Despite their differences, and sometimes to their own surprise, they find themselves united by the pursuit of the common good of a virtuous community sensitive to the unity between doing philosophy, studying history, and dramatically living it.

The purpose of this special edition of «Acta Philosophica» is to gather critical analyses of MacIntyre's work and its impact from leading researchers from a panoply of perspectives. Profoundly indebted to and influenced by Aristotle and Aquinas, MacIntyre has shown throughout his lifetime the ability to learn from his philosophical mentors, while sincerely confronting his contemporaries and generating a coherent account of the moral life united by its narrative structure. For MacIntyre, moral accountability entails the pursuit of human perfection as relational and rational beings, and always in accord with their inherent teleology. Given the multifaceted perspectives in MacIntyre's complex and systematic but constantly evolving work, this monographic issue selects

*Anglophone Philosophy Books Published Since WWII (According to Google Scholar)*: <https://leiterreports.typepad.com/blog/2017/01/most-cited-anglophone-philosophy-books-published-since-wwii.html> (posted on 10/1/2017, accessed 17/06/2019).

<sup>4</sup> A. C. MACINTYRE, *Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative and the Philosophy of Science*, «Monist», 60/4 (1977), pp. 453-472.

<sup>5</sup> See: [www.macintyreanenquiry.org/](http://www.macintyreanenquiry.org/).

some of the most central topics of MacIntyre's interests and presents them through the lens of some of the most renowned interpreters of his tradition.

Given the limits of length for this publication and the breadth of MacIntyre's philosophical production, rather than including studies of MacIntyre regarding specialized topics, we chose to focus on the following five especially pivotal areas of MacIntyrean scholarship: 1) tradition embedded epistemology, 2) the New Left's critique of capitalist modernity, 3) relationality and community at the intersection between moral philosophy and sociology; 4) natural law; 5) teleology, flourishing, and narrative; and to conclude with a thematic, annotated bibliography.

Given that «Acta Philosophica» is an international journal based in Rome and after inviting submissions and performing blind reviews, we decided to select three articles in English and two in Italian. The first article of this volume is written by Christopher S. Lutz, who is especially well known for his *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's After Virtue*<sup>6</sup> and *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre*.<sup>7</sup> In his article, entitled *Narrative and the Rationality of Traditions: MacIntyre's Epistemological Stance*, Lutz considers the account given by MacIntyre on narrative and the rationality of traditions for interpreting MacIntyre's works from the late 70s until today. Lutz proposes that MacIntyre's theory of the rationality of tradition entails both retrospection and forward looking prescription for a path of cultivation of the virtues, education, and shared political life.

The second article, by Peter McMylor, entitled *MacIntyre's Critique of the Performative Legitimation of Capitalist Modernity* describes the importance of appreciating the setting, in the emergence of the British New Left in the late 1950s and early 1960s, for MacIntyre's critique of the social and economic order of modern capitalist modernity. McMylor highlights the continuing significance of some of the key themes explored by the New Left throughout all of MacIntyre's work up until his recent *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*.<sup>8</sup> By highlighting the importance of sociological analysis within MacIntyre's philosophical critique of modernity, McMylor shows how MacIntyre's moral philosophy insofar as it is rooted in social practices is especially congenial to sociology.

The third article, in Italian, by Sergio Belardinelli and Luigi Cimmino, offers a re-reading of *After Virtue* with a special focus on the concepts of identity and community, and it is entitled *Il realismo etico di Alasdair MacIntyre: identità e co-*

<sup>6</sup> C. S. LUTZ, *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's After Virtue*, Continuum, London-New York 2012.

<sup>7</sup> C. S. LUTZ, *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre: Relativism, Thomism, and Philosophy*, Lexington Books, Lanham 2004.

<sup>8</sup> A. C. MACINTYRE, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, New York 2016.

munità tra le pagine di *Dopo la virtù* (*The Ethical Realism of Alasdair MacIntyre: Identity and Community in the Pages of After Virtue*). Belardinelli and Cimmino were the editors of an important collection in Italian,<sup>9</sup> which helped to spread MacIntyrean thought in Italy. In their contribution for this monographic issue, Belardinelli and Cimmino review the sociological dimension of MacIntyre's proposal as found in *After Virtue*. They thereby offer a clear and succinct introduction to the central themes of *After Virtue* from the perspective of sociology. They analyze MacIntyre's critique of modern individualism and his proposal of communities of virtues enriched with embedded practices while also explaining MacIntyre's profound differences with communitarianism and conclude with a MacIntyrean proposal for addressing the crisis of modernity by means of education to foster communities of virtue.

The fourth article, also in Italian, by Sante Maletta and Dario Mazzola, entitled *Legge naturale e critica del liberalismo in MacIntyre: Aspetti teorici e prospettive critiche* (*Natural Law and Critique of Liberalism in MacIntyre: Theoretical Aspects and Critical Perspectives*) offers an outline of MacIntyre's theory of natural law and then discusses Jean Porter and Gerald McKenny's critical responses to MacIntyre's account of the natural law. Maletta is well known for his previous work in Italian on MacIntyre including one of the more influential monographs on MacIntyre's thought.<sup>10</sup>

The fifth article, by Robert A. Gahl, Jr., entitled *MacIntyre on Teleology, Narrative, and Human Flourishing: Towards a Thomistic Narrative Anthropology* proposes that the secondary literature on MacIntyre neglects to appreciate the extent to which natural teleology, human flourishing, and dramatic narrative are intrinsically and inseparably interwoven, especially as MacIntyre has developed these three concepts in his more recent work. Moreover, Gahl challenges Thomists regarding the need to engage the unity between teleology, narrative, and flourishing in the work of Aquinas and concludes by proposing a narrative anthropology crafted to constructively engage MacIntyre's proposal from the perspective of Aquinas' own work.

Finally with his *Thematic Bibliography: Alasdair MacIntyre (III)*, Caleb Bernacchio offers a brilliant synthesis of MacIntyre's production and anglophone scholarship from 2011 to 2018. Marco D'Avenia, ambassador of MacIntyrean scholarship in Italy and translator of some of MacIntyre's work into Italian, published in previous volumes of *Acta Philosophica* a thematic bibliography of MacIntyre's work from 1984 to 2001<sup>11</sup> and from 2002 to

<sup>9</sup> S. BELARDINELLI, L. CIMMINO (eds.), *Monografia: Alasdair MacIntyre*, «Studi Perugini», 3 (1997).

<sup>10</sup> S. MALETTA, *Biografia della ragione*, Rubbettino, Soveria Mannelli 2007.

<sup>11</sup> M. D'AVENIA, *Bibliografia tematica: opere recenti sulla filosofia morale di Alasdair MacIntyre*, «Acta Philosophica», 11/1 (2002), pp. 159-168.

2010.<sup>12</sup> Bernacchio continues and updates D'Avenia's previous bibliographies. With his thematic bibliographical annotations Bernacchio helpfully emphasizes the lesser known articles published by MacIntyre and offers a broad and carefully selected collection of relevant secondary bibliography on MacIntyre.

This monographic issue owes a great deal of gratitude to an extended community of scholarship, certainly to each of the contributors, to the editorial staff of «Acta Philosophica», especially the Editor-in-Chief Juan Andrés Mercado and the Editorial Executive Assistant Viviana Spagnuolo, and also to the anonymous reviewers. Most of all, the guest editors of this special edition have pursued this entire project as a tribute of gratitude to Alasdair MacIntyre for challenging us, through his writing and through his personal testimony and friendship, to pursue virtue in the academic community while striving to communicate to others the joy of pursuing a life lived for a unifying good that both fulfils and surpasses our human nature as dependent rational animals.

<sup>12</sup> M. D'AVENIA, *Bibliografia tematica: Alasdair MacIntyre (II)*, «Acta Philosophica», 19/1 (2010), pp. 195-210.