

ONE POSSIBLE SOLUTION FOR MACINTYRE'S PROBLEM OF VIRTUE
IN THE MODERN AGE: WENDELL BERRY AS THE INSTANTIATION
OF MACINTYRE'S *GOOD LIFE* (SUSTAINABILITY AS A VIRTUE)

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INTRODUCTION

Alasdair MacIntyre makes quite clear towards the end of *After Virtue* that the trouble he sees in modernity is humanity's failure to achieve its *telos*. The failure, he claims, is a result of the anti-philosophical position *emotivism*, which proves devastating to rational discourse. Emotivism owes both its force and the increase of its practitioners to the moral vacuum characterizing modernity's lack of a common stock of ideas which lend intelligibility to a moral system. Following his identification of the problem, MacIntyre argues that there are a limited range of possible responses open to us. The first response couldn't possibly garner his support, as it holds that, since emotivism is irreparable because it cannot be rationally grounded, one may as well give up and embrace "the modern world with its emotivism, liberalism, and [its industrial] capitalism."¹ The second possibility, one MacIntyre seems to entertain, suggests a narrowing of the scope of experience to what might be possible within the walls of something like a Benedictine monastery.² There the good life would lie dormant until some future date, when conditions would permit it to reemerge into the world. This might, to some, appear Epicurean rather than Aristotelian in nature.

¹ Clayton, Ted. "Political Philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre." *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/p-macint/>

² MacIntyre, Alasdair. *After Virtue*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008, 263.

In this thesis I aim to propose a third response to the problems of modernity, one unmentioned by MacIntyre himself, though suggested by an analysis of some of his key concepts. My claim is that the good life is attainable by “plain persons,” and that this third path is instantiated in (or by) both the life and work of Wendell Berry. This third way suggests a virtue of sustainability as one that could properly motivate its practitioners and thread other virtues together as a response to the crisis of modernity.

As the reader will soon see, MacIntyre fulfills what our subsequent discussion’s description of the *moral philosopher* is, while Wendell Berry fulfills that of the *plain person*. Berry, is a poet, a novelist, a teacher in the Kentuckian University system, Kentuckian farmer, and therefore someone who has grappled with making a living on the land, with membership in a human and natural community, with matters of social justice (i.e. *The Hidden Wound, Racism and the Economy, etc.*), and with conceptions of the good life – including serious engagement with virtue theory.

I argue for Berry as an exemplar of a third-way response to the problem MacIntyre outlines, I also argue for sustainability as an addition to previous conceptions of the virtues (one for which Berry is an example) out of a consideration of what it means for a human being to flourish. That a flourishing life is a central concern of human beings is a notion shared by many, including all virtue theorists. To flourish is to actively pursue one’s excellence, to work in the best, the virtuous way toward one’s *telos*. Such flourishing cannot be something temporary, but must be sustained and sustainable. It must be sustained and sustainable for individuals, communities, and in relation to the larger environment – including non-human nature. In the work and life of Wendell Berry I argue that we find an example of one way of life that is suited toward this end,

embodying both theoretical and practical knowledge and activity, and characterized by the deep affectional bonds necessary to sustain flourishing relations with self, society, and nature.

CHAPTER I
ARISTOTLE'S THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL WISDOMS AND THE
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THEM

In this chapter I set the foundation for this thesis with a general discussion planting the discussion's seed as that of a general discussion concerning the human *ergon*, to then turn to an explanation of the highest "excellence" (*wisdom*) the guiding light giving proper expression to all things necessarily expressed for the sake of this human *ergon*.

This discussion is immediately followed by another briefer one concerning both *theoretical* and *practical reason*, within which I aim to uncover the several contrasting, complementary, and/or similar features between them, as it is expected that these should readily come to the fore. Then, subsequent to this portion of the enquiry, the reader shall discover that the discussion's direction moves once again towards *wisdom* with a re-visitation of it (Part IV) (for the sake of consistency and clarity) in similar, if not identical, language as that which was previously used (in Part II), while pushing the enquiry even further with the intended purpose of accounting for any other salient features of *wisdom* that any fair treatment might require.

The purpose of such an approach is to move towards this paper's end, all the while illustrating for the reader the several essential "features" underscoring not only the nature of the relationship between *theoretical reason* and *practical reason*, which should also clarify their distinction from wisdom, and re/establish for them, a clearer conceptual

framework through which to conceive of the proper relationship between *theoretical* and *practical wisdom* according to each of these two *wisdom*'s respective proper role when put into the service of achieving the human *ergon*.

Eudaimonia as the Human Ergon

According to Thomas Nagel, in the *Nicomachean Ethics* there are two different accounts of *eudaimonia*, one of an intellectualist nature, and the other of a comprehensive nature. More specifically, *Nicomachean Ethics (Book X)* has *eudaimonia* as that which is realized as that activity of the most divine part in a human being--theoretical contemplation. Yet, according to the comprehensive account, *eudaimonia* involves NOT JUST the activity of the theoretical intellect, but more particularly, the "full range of human life and action, in accordance with the broader excellences of moral virtue and practical wisdom."³

This view connects *eudaimonia* with the conception of human nature as composite (i.e. as involving the interaction of reason, emotion, perception, and action in an ensouled body). This function or process is what we shall understand as the human *ergon*. In other words, of all things that have an *ergon*, these things' good is a function of its *ergon*.

If I was pressed to put it somewhat differently once again, "the *ergon* of a thing, in general, is what it does that makes it what it is."⁴ The proper *ergon* of humans is what makes something human rather than anything else. So for humans to do what they do

³ Nagel, Thomas. "Aristotle of Eudaimonia." *Phronesis* 17:3, 1972. 252.

⁴ *Ibid*, 253.

best, they must mix their “activity” with the exercise of the rational faculty coupled with the contemplative.⁵ The particular view that shall follow is more of a composite view rather than an intellectualist one, and as this argument unfolds, my reader should discover an argument articulating Alasdair MacIntyre’s vision of the Good Life, and the human *Ergon*, as an example of the composite view, and that this Good Life is, as MacIntyre pointed towards in the closing remarks of a now famous inauguration speech, instantiated by the life and works of Wendell Berry.

So what we have is the *ergon*, which for human kind is rational, and as I understand it, the best life is a life of virtue in accordance with reason. There are things that can help one achieve this, and there are things that would keep one from achieving this, and two of the essentials for man to achieve this would be both his theoretical and practical faculties.

So, while *theoria* is very important, since it sees the broad structure of the human good, it is only with *phronesis* that we shall be both able to discern and disposed to do what is best for us in the situations we might find ourselves in that would require us to have all the excellences of character. So what you have is a unity of excellences informed by practical wisdom, the benefit to which is that each disposition of human character becomes fully excellent. So to be practically wise, one is required to possess every excellence of character. It’s worth noting that, according to Nagel, “in a sense Aristotle has only two human excellences,” theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) and then that of practical wisdom together with the excellences of character.

⁵*Ibid*, 253.

In a “correlative sense” there are only two human activities. For Aristotle the point is not simply discernment of the best thing, but the doing of it, which if this *doing* is informed by practical wisdom (*phronesis*), that which “leads to action,” it will be done excellently in accord with one’s prior-chosen end. Hence, these excellences of *sophia* and the *phronesis*, together with all the excellences of human character is the exact combination required for this fulfillment of one’s function (*ergon*).⁶

Again the activity of fulfilling one’s *ergon* places one in a state of *eudaimonia*. Hence, it is a lifetime of activity directed at the pursuit of excellence which constitutes the happy life, the best human life. For this we need the prior spoken-of human excellences. Only at this point may humans do well at what is best for them, whatever the situation, and thus acquire the best kind of life humanly possible--given their circumstances. The ideal life circumstances for a human are those which allow us, or leave us free, to contemplate so much as is possible, given the “inevitable physical, emotional, and social demands of human nature.”⁷

Aristotle is **NOT** saying that the happiest human life is one wherein only one thing is valued, theoretical activity. More realistically, we can conceive of the happiest human life as one wherein the circumstances are such that it allows us to engage in contemplation as much as possible. “Happiness: a life consisting of a human life-activity done well” is, a “life in accord with the excellence of intuitive intellect that is happiest, while that in accord with the other excellence” is happy.⁸

⁶ *Ibid*, 252-59.

⁷ Lawrence, Gavin. ‘Aristotle and the Ideal Life.’” *The Philosophical Review*. 102:1. Jan 1993, 17.

⁸ *Ibid*, 17.

Eudaimonia would be activity in accord with the most valuable, best part of the soul. This is intuitive intellect. So it is the activity of the intuitive intellect done well, that is, in accord with the proper excellence that is perfect, or complete, happiness – *teleia eudaimonia*. And the activity of *nous* is contemplative (If *eudaimonia* is an activity in accord with an excellence, it stands to reason that it would be activity in accord with the most valuable).⁹

To the question of how everyday life generates a sense of life as a whole, the traditional responses have been (1) *theoria*, “the recognition, the realization of that reality which transcends the subject-object dichotomy, and in which the knowledge of God is the same as God’s knowledge”; and (2) *moral personality*, whereby one orients their actions towards life as a whole, and these composite actions of life as a whole are only done well by way of an “ongoing creation and reassessment of one’s happiness or *eudaimonia*”¹⁰, a viewpoint that seems to espouse a narrative unity approach, similar to that of MacIntyre, I believe.

At the conclusion of this foundational section, a few things should be recounted concerning the content thus far, and a point or two concerning what can be expected to follow. As it concerns the content to present, what needs to be understood is that the human *telos* is to successfully achieve human potential, for acquiring his specific “function” (the human *ergon*), and this is *eudaimonia*.

⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

¹⁰ Colebrook, Claire “Happiness, Theoria and Everyday Life.” *Symploke* 11:1/2 (2003) 135.

While this subject (*eudaimonia*) warrants a body of work in its own right, for our purposes, *it* should be understood as that towards which we are driven, but that very few, if any, achieve *it*, although however rare this *true* experience of this *eudaimonia* may be, it is not impossible. It can be achieved, privately or personally, on an intellectualist account, as *sophia* (or *theoria*), and/or instantiated in the composite form within the well-managed household, as it rests within the healthy village now securely wedged within the gates of the robust *polis*. In Chapter 3 we shall consider how this telos might be instantiated in the life and work of a plain person, specifically Wendell Berry.

Conceptions of Wisdom

In order to secure the intelligibility of an enquiry into the relationship between theoretical and practical wisdom, it stands to reason that this enquiry's soon-to-unfold discussion requires another yet foundational anchor in some rudimentary notions of wisdom. This (both Part(s) I and II) is necessary from the outset, if for no other reason than to secure for my reader the proper arrangement between concepts (and some terms), given their respective meanings, and for the sake of intelligibility, the importance for basic exposure to the associated language.

On that note, let us begin by discussing our object of interest, "wisdom," as it enjoys a general kind of familiarity in its comprehension and usage as a common term among *plain persons*; however, there are numerous other subtle and not-so-subtle variances between these definitions. Aristotle refers to *wisdom* as "knowledge through cause." While, in the same period, a differing meaning generally accepted by "elite Greek philosophical circles" was that of "an all-embracing kind of knowledge" on the

level of “deities” rather than human beings. Then Socrates amended this notion, viewing wisdom as something that “contemplates beauty in itself and in its entirety, divine beauty.”¹¹

Many have defended theories of wisdom that require a wise person to have *knowledge of a particular sort*, although none of these “particular sorts,” should be understood as “expertise.” This becomes obvious as one comes to understand *wisdom* as a character trait connected with the kind of self-direction instantiated through one’s actions. Such actions have been determined through deliberation (which is a function of the practical) over that which appears to be a likely contribution towards the *good life* and is, thereby, deemed worthy of the choice commanding its exercise.

With this in mind, it goes without saying that the wise person will know “what is important” (*phronesis*), in pursuit of his or her particularly determined end, as this is the only basic characteristic of what all persons, in all cultures, and at all times agree is that which is an essential characteristic of *wisdom*.

So, while all considerations of *wisdom* agree that the wise know “what is important” when the views between these very same persons become the objects of enquiry concerning that which it is necessary that a wise person be aware of regarding specific behaviors, actions, and/or ways to live one’s life which are prerequisites for wisdom, the views are manifold. This is an example of the principle distinction between descriptive knowledge and interpretive knowledge.¹² Insofar as this project is concerned,

¹¹ Owens, Joseph. “Aristotle’s Notion of Wisdom” *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 20:1 (Spring 1987) 4.

¹² Kekes, John. “Wisdom.” *American Philosophical Quarterly*. 20:3 (July 1983) 278.

the following aims to unveil an argument for sustainability as a virtue, while simultaneously laying the foundation for an argument calling for sustaining those practices and traditions that allow for human flourishing.

In addition to the above, a decent, general characterization of *wisdom* requires us to make several things clear. Wisdom is characterized by one's honest appraisal of one's own limitations through the basic precepts (*phronesis*) and the comprehensive significance of those relationships (spatially, temporally, and/or personally) between himself and the world (*theoria*). This means that the one who is wise (1) views his "life steadily" and "as a whole" (*nous*)¹³, which, in turn, (2) enables him to conceive of his good (final) end as it falls within the category of what is good for man in general (*theoria*), and therefore (3), to also keenly judge the best means to good ends (*phronesis*).

This self-knowledge is then put into tension with the way in which one *ought* to act with respect to his ideals (good judgment). Assuming that he calculates correctly, he will choose, with delight (given that he has by now acquired the mature disposition of moral virtue), "to modify his wants in accordance with his ideals," as any serious student of the subject would agree -- as this would be the virtuous way of moving forward(ly). This is the process of virtuous activity, however it is never taught, since its successful acquisition requires "breadth," and "depth," locked into a certain kind of harmony with a resilient constancy when one is faced with obstacles and (not to mention the internal

¹³ *Ibid*, 280.

goods that this ability requires), all finding their proper arrangements with one another through a hierarchical ranking of one's commitments.¹⁴

At this point, we should address certain terms of importance in this discussion, which will assist to advance our comprehension of the relevant epistemological relationships. To break this down, there are two types of knowledge: the first worth mentioning is *descriptive knowledge*, and the second is *interpretive knowledge*. The former is the knowledge of *facts*, while the latter is the knowledge of the *significance* of the interpretive facts. These "commonplaces" are those universals otherwise understood as *basic assumptions*. It seems to be the case that people are not necessarily conscious of their 'commitment' to basic assumptions, and the reason for this is that these assumptions are so fundamental that humans have no liberty of choice with regard to whether or not they hold to these assumptions as universal foundations of reality, "the most elementary form of descriptive knowledge," the "physiologically based, information provided by our senses."¹⁵

If we are to approach the subject matter as promised, we must take these *basic assumptions* and observe them in relation to *interpretive knowledge*. Accordingly, we shall begin by noting that "interpretive knowledge" interprets the facts as they are "supplied" by the "yet-to-be-interpreted *basic assumptions*." This process doesn't reveal new truths, since the basic assumptions are of a universal, unchanging nature; however,

¹⁴ *Ibid* 279-80.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 279.

many old truths await rediscovery, and it is, once again, this *interpretive knowledge* that enables us to rediscover these truths of the *cosmic order*.

This interpretive knowledge is aimed at understanding the significance of these basic assumptions with regard to living a *good life* – it leads us to the knowledge of priorities and depth; however, this is only possible through an accurate interpretation -- which requires several things. The first of these is that quality mentioned above, “breadth,” and we will explain this as “[t]he recognition that the conventional description of situations regarded as paradigmatic in one’s own context is just one option among many.” A lack of breadth is likely to show itself hand-in-hand with dogmatism, and it “stands in the way” of the “tolerant liberality of spirit,” a disposition worth cultivation.

Coupled with breadth, comes depth, that quality which “comes from understanding that underlying the manifold differences among human beings...the fundamental similarities of basic assumptions...We finally arrive at constancy and all we find implied by one’s constancy in the face of adversity.”¹⁶ Assuming I’m not mistaken, it’s this sort of steadfastness of character (*moral virtue*) which enables one to remain loyal to the *good means* toward his *good end*.

When condensed, the above might translate as follows: “to understand the connection between the commonplaces of basic assumptions and commitments to ideals requires understanding [of] the limitations and possibilities that apply equally to all human beings.” This requires *reasonable ideals*, features of which include: (1) remaining mindful of the universal and the unavoidable characteristics of the human condition, while, at the same time (2) recognizing that these conditions “are bound to have a

¹⁶ *Ibid*, 279.

crucially important bearing on any life that a human being may want to live,” and (3) demanding that attention and constancy remain maintained with respect to those priorities understood as “those which prove perilous if not observed,”¹⁷ since one must balance all considerations between concerns for the present and those for the future while seeking rational guidance in judgment.

As a general account of wisdom, the content to present provides the essential foundation; however, prior to shifting the direction of our enquiry directly into the types of wisdom, and their respective roles insofar as they work concertedly towards a good end, let us first orient ourselves with a brief account of the two types of reason as each necessarily reflects the function of each of these two parts of the rational soul (the theoretical and the practical).

Theoretical and Practical Reason

With our understanding of “wisdom” as a general theme thus provided with a sturdier foundation, I will now attempt to articulate a few of the features comprising both types of reason, theoretical and practical in the spirit of buttressing our understanding of theoretical and practical wisdom. It was my original intent, following what intuitively made sense, to begin this portion of the discussion with theoretical reason, only to move beyond it to practical reason; however, upon closer examination, it seems to make more sense to briefly address them together, as best as possible, while showcasing the several important distinctions and similarities between them. This effort’s success will require at least a brief account of both types of reason.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 280.

Theoretical (speculative) reason is the type of reason used to determine what one should believe (hence, what is truth?). It reasons about questions of explanation and prediction. It looks into the past and the future to consider what has happened, while also contemplating the possibilities that might exist for the future.¹⁸ This includes the process of determining the legitimacy or faultiness, and in concert with this, our acceptance or rejection of particular claims as to what is and what is not truth. The use of theoretical reason (and the accompanying process of reflection) as an instrument to conclude what one ought or ought not to believe sometimes does produce changes in one's overall set of beliefs (which might influence the operative functioning of *phronesis*).

Practical reason arises out of the general human capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what *ought* to be done, what action *ought* to be taken. When one deliberates about an action in such a way as this, he thinks about himself and his situation in characteristic ways. This kind of deliberation is practical in two ways. In the first place, it is practical in its substance, insofar as it concerns action. It is also practical in its consequences insofar as it reflects with a view to determine the means which will make possible the *good end*. With this very brief yet, for our purposes, sufficient consideration of both theoretical and practical reason, let us now revisit *wisdom* generally, only to move into accounts of both theoretical and practical wisdom.

Wisdom Revisited: Theoretical and Practical

The above discussion elucidates that the sole means of becoming a wise person is through the considered practice of reason instantiated in deliberation, just as the act of

¹⁸ Allan, D.J. "Magna Moralia and Nicomachean Ethics." *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77:1 (1957) 7-11.

deliberation is evidence of an individual in possession of wisdom (moral virtue). With this in mind, let us now turn our attention to the types of wisdom charged with guiding the wise man's (thoughts and) actions, and which are always reflected in his behavior. According to Aristotle, there are two types of wisdom, theoretical and practical. The former, theoretical wisdom is interpretive; it is intellectual, metaphysical knowledge of first principles, consisting of fundamental truths about reality.

Practical wisdom, on the other hand, is action-guiding--it is the specific type of wisdom that facilitates the determination of the *good means* to achieve the *good end*. Good judgment "follows from wisdom. Wisdom is to arrange one's life so as to aim to satisfy those wants that accord with his ideals, while paying due regard to human limitations and possibilities in general, and his own limitations and possibilities in particular."¹⁹ Here, our attention is once again directed to the fact that practical wisdom is both universal and contextual, and as one deliberates over the best means to the *good end* within the light of a clear acknowledgment of, not only the limitations inherent within the human species generally, but also of those limitations specific to oneself.

Before this essay moves forward to the next step, I feel it necessary to reaffirm the understandings that are hopefully now in play, however I must first deliver a single disclaimer in reference to the use of the terms *sophia* and *theoria*. At the time of this enquiry, there seemed to be disproportional bodies of work on these two wisdoms. *Phronesis* enjoys lots of attention while theoretical wisdom seems to lack in the same degree this attention, so much so that it was difficult to determine whether *theoria* or *sophia* properly translates as the associated Greek word. Theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) is

¹⁹ Kekes, John, 285.

“a combination of knowledge of fundamental principles (*nous*) and knowledge of what follows from those principles (*theoria*).”²⁰ It is to the goods associated with *theoria* which Aristotle holds to be of the highest value, as is evident by the fact that such a capacity is unique to humans “as well as gods.” Its superiority is furthered when one considers that Aristotle also credits theoretical reasoning informed by *theoria* with movement towards *eudaimonia*, the ultimate *human* good. Practical reasoning, on the other hand is evident in other animals, indicating that it is not the thing which sets humanity apart (*ergon*) as exceptional creatures in earthly terms. In contrast to scientific things-rediscovered, which become things-known, which demonstrate theoretical wisdom, practical wisdom deliberates over subjects for which there is no complete certainty.

The *good means* to the *good end*, unlike the *good end* itself, is unlikely consistent from one person to the next, from one place to the next, and from one set of particularities to the next (In other words, there *is* the *good* and the *best*, though the exactness of what is required is context dependent---that is virtue is relative to the person, but this does not indicate some form of pernicious relativism). And, there will be such similarities between good means that we can evaluate the acts of others – especially those in our immediate moral community.

A small child trying to get past a tall fence might choose to climb under it through a small hole, whereas an adult, with longer legs and considerably more bulk, might determine that the best means to get beyond the obstacle is to climb. Such *phronesis* is

²⁰ Gier, N. “Aristotle on the Intellectual Virtues.” http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/ngier/490/intellectual_virtues.htm

directed at the *general* goal of the *good life* and the particular *good means* to arrive at that goal; and it is also the core virtue, absent until one acquires the mature, well-formed moral disposition. Without this, the operation of the virtues is impossible. If, or better yet when, one achieves *phronesis*, one then understands virtue generally and reveals to oneself as well as to others through virtuous action that he possesses virtue (*arête*).

Also of notable significance for the one who reflects on these two kinds of knowledge is that of their respective sources and first principles. In the case of *theoria*, its first principles are “found in the independently existent physical world, the world of reality.”²¹ It would serve this enquiry well to point out, however, that one would presume that the aspect of theoretical knowledge charged with recognizing the divine would have its grounding somewhere other than the earthly, material world. Human choice is what steers practical knowledge. However, “[t]he world in which human[s] conduct [their lives] takes place is the same world that is viewed theoretically by the speculative sciences. Conduct is not separable from reality.”²²

This illustrates that one must have theoretical knowledge in order to determine wise action. This does not mean, however, that this theoretical knowledge changes in form to become practical knowledge. It remains consistent to its nature as *theoria*; but, it is available for inclusion in the deliberations of practical wisdom (*phronesis*), used as an instrument to facilitate the quest for the wise choice of action/means. “[T]he very nature

²¹ Owens, Joseph, 9.

²² *Ibid*, 9.

of practical wisdom requires theoretical wisdom as its instrument. The two go together in the deliberation.”²³

Theoretical Wisdom

Theoretical wisdom, or *sophia*, rests on pillars of knowledge concerning fundamental principles (*nous*) and knowledge of what follows from those principles (*theoria*). “Wisdom must plainly be the most finished of the forms of knowledge [as i]t follows that the wise man must not only know what follows from the first principles, but must also possess truth about the first principles. Therefore, wisdom must be comprehension combined with knowledge – knowledge of the highest objects which have received, as it were, their proper completion.”²⁴ This is their *ergon*.

Nous is a trait inherent to humanity, something which Voegelin describes as the state of restless, but not absolute ignorance, in which the soul enters the conscious world. In this state of “unactualized potential” the soul is ignorant of *something* and questioning *after something*, even if it is unconscious of the fact of its questioning...the soul in the state of questioning unrest must become conscious of its own state; it must recognize *that* it has a desire to know before the potential motion within it can be actualized. Once this occurs, the journey has begun... a motion in the soul from the fact of questioning to the source of questioning in the divine ground...there is a kind of knowledge or insight that results from the very experience of the divine-human encounter in the soul, and this is the knowledge of the structure of the soul *qua* movement toward the divine.²⁵

²³ *Ibid*, 9.

²⁴ Aristotle. “Nicomachean Ethics VI 7.” The Complete Works of Aristotle. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, 1801.

²⁵ Corey, David D. “Voegelin and Aristotle on *Nous* What is Noetic Political Science?” *The Review of Politics* 64:1 (Winter 2002) 61-62.

This theological aspect of *nous* seeks what is universal, “the ultimate universal itself,” that which is common to all humans, “that common element” held to be good -- *eudaimonia*.” However, *nous* is not concerned solely with the divine; there is also a scientific aspect of *nous* which addresses itself to more material concerns and with the particulars of earthly life.

What *nous* ultimately aims at, in both of its permutations – focused on the divine and on the scientific, is wisdom, *sophia*. Aristotle places self-sufficiency “front and center” of this hierarchy of virtues, as this is what distinguishes *theoria*: the highest of self-sufficient activities. This, according to Aristotle, means that it is “complete in its very exercise...It is fully and perfectly achieved in the very act... The complete good is thought to be self-sufficient...The self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing...and such we think happiness to be.”²⁶ Another way of looking at “self-sufficiency” is as that which leads to happiness, that which is defined “as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing.”²⁷ In other words, he who makes *good* use of *theoria* shall serve as a living example for all who care to know what he who *is* self-sufficient and, so, virtuous, does.

Theoria directs humans toward that which contributes to the excellence of a human being as a human being, the species’ *ergon*. As a side note, Rorty disputes the idea that deliberation is only applicable to means; she argues that deliberation concerning ends is just as possible. “[O]ur general ends are the actualization and exercise of the

²⁶ Aristotle. “Nicomachean Ethics 17:”The Complete Works of Aristotle.. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995,1734.

²⁷ MacKay, A F. “Aristotle’s Dilemma.” *The Journal of Ethics* 9:3/4 (2005) 540.

basic activities that define us. If external objects can be contemplated, and if species are external objects, Humanity and its proper ends can be contemplated.”²⁸

Practical Wisdom

Aristotle defines practical wisdom, also known as *phronesis*, as “a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good or bad for man.”²⁹ Practical wisdom cannot be taught, it is acquired through experience gained with the living out of a virtuous life – only the person who is good can name the good. *Phronesis* is crucial for the successful organization of means directed towards satisfying the necessary conditions for the *good life*; it “is a true and reasoned state of capacity to act with regard to the things that are good and bad for man.”³⁰ The traditionally accepted Latin translation of “*phronesis*” is “*prudentia*,” a word which is derived from “*providentia*,” which is defined as “ability for insight, the knowledge of which presumes ‘wisdom’ in the knowledge by which it provides for the future.”³¹

Practical wisdom has two functions, an intuitive function, and a discursive function. The intuitive function is *practical intuition*, that which is concerned with “the ends of our actions,” while the discursive function is deliberation, understood as that which is concerned with “the means to our ends.” Aristotle is clear in his admonition that theoretical knowledge in any form is not in any way the same as practical knowledge in

²⁸ Rorty, Amelie Oksenberg. “The place of Contemplation in Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics.” *Mind, New Series* 87:347 (July 1978) 346.

²⁹ Aristotle. “Nicomachean Ethics VI:”The Complete Works of Aristotle. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995,1800.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 1800.

³¹ Owens, Joseph, 7.

any form. For as our enquiry has to present made explicitly clear, in Aristotle's view, there are two quite distinct parts of the human intellectual soul. The first is that part which is concerned with those things which cannot be anything other than what they are, the invariable, such as the divine, that part of the soul which is the repository of theoretical knowledge which ideally is aimed at theoretical wisdom. The other portion of the soul belongs to those things which are not set fast, those things that can be variable, that portion of the soul informed by practical knowledge (which Schollmeier also refers to as opinion) and perfected in practical wisdom.³²

Here we come to a point of contention, referred to earlier, between Rorty and Schollmeier. Whereas Rorty asserted that deliberation is applicable not only to means, but to ends as well, Schollmeier maintains that Aristotle is clear that ends are not subject to deliberation – we don't deliberate about things that cannot be otherwise, as this (deliberation) is a tool of practical reason alone. Aristotle's own words do make clear that this is the case:

We deliberate not about ends but about what contributes to ends, for a doctor does not deliberate whether he shall heal, nor an orator whether he shall convince, nor a statesman whether he shall produce law and order, nor does anyone else deliberate about this end. Having set the end they consider how and by what means it is to be attained ... [T]he end cannot be a subject of deliberation, but only what contributes to the ends... If we are to be always deliberating, we shall have to go on into infinity... choice will be deliberate desire of things in our own power; for when we have decided as a result of deliberation, we desire in accordance with our deliberation.³³

³² Schollmeier, Paul. "Aristotle on Practical Reason." *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 43:1 (Jan/Mar 1989) 124-32.

³³ Aristotle. "Nicomachean Ethics III:"The Complete Works of Aristotle.. Vol. 2. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995,1756.

Theoria has only one aim, to answer the question, “What is true, what is the truth?” *Phronesis*, on the other hand, follows the path laid by the truth and directed at “coercing desire,” in the pursuit of virtue: “virtue in choice, and choice---good choice---in true principle and right desire. And true principle makes desire right.”³⁴

The individual possessing practical wisdom will necessarily be capable of deliberating well concerning the good for himself, specifically, and the sorts of conduct which are conducive to the good life generally; in reflection of this, the man who is capable of deliberating well is necessarily possessed of practical wisdom. As we shall see in Chapter 2, the capacity for deliberation and practical wisdom can be cultivated in humans, and in Chapter 3 we shall examine an instance of such a person. For now, as we look at this, what becomes apparent is that practical wisdom (*phronesis*), though Aristotle confers on it less status as an excellence of the soul than that of theoretical wisdom (*theoria*), is a broader and more inclusive activity. We see this in another way as well. While *phronesis* is, to a certain degree, focused on the universal and human good in general (as it uses *theoria* as “an instrument,” and practical wisdom un-moored from theoretical wisdom might well be what Plato characterized as “belief” or Useful Ignorance – something that might well work, but about which I do not know whether it is true or false.), it is also meant to direct toward particulars, specifically, the particulars of the individuals who direct their lives through the activities of reason, contemplation, and virtuous action.

³⁴ Schollmeier, Paul, 126.

Chapter Summary

In conclusion, it suffices to briefly trace the logical structure of the above content. Since we were looking into the relationship between theoretical and practical wisdom, it made sense to begin with a brief account of that which is the end of this relationship between the theoretical and the practical wisdom---the human *ergon*. This human *ergon* is the function of man, and the fulfillment of this is his *telos*, otherwise known as *eudaimonia* (a.k.a. human flourishing). The attainment of this is the standard against which he measures his own excellence. His excellence in this regard, once again is his *ergon*, and this is only possible through a certain activity of the soul.

Theoria perfects theoretical reason as it works towards *sophia* in the very same way that *phronesis* perfects the movement of practical reasoning towards the human *telos*. *If everything appears duly treated, and no other stones require overturning*, then the last thing worth noting is that this *ergon* is possible both privately and personally, on an intellectualist account, *theoria*, and/or instantiated in one way among many, in a composite form as perhaps from within a well-managed household, nestled within the healthy village, and/or hiding even more securely within walls of the robust *polis* as is much the content of discussion in Aristotle's *Politics*. Let us now take our understanding of the heretofore, and move this discussion forward and into slightly more practical language by conceiving of it *en via* what follows – as that which comprises MacIntyre's (the moral philosopher's) conception of the good life (both in general, and in particular).

CHAPTER II MACINTYRE'S GOOD LIFE

In this section of the thesis, I aim to set the foundations for the remaining body of work by articulating the substance of MacIntyre's *good life*, which should also provide the parameters beyond which nothing else shall qualify as part of *it* and provides a standard for determining the quality of what does. It is only from this type of view that one can begin to understand why, for MacIntyre, intelligible action serves as an even more fundamental concept than that of action itself. To be clear, before one acts, there necessarily is the command to act, which derives from what action was determined best given the context and the meaning embedded therein.

Actions require the conception of an end towards which each is directed in order for it to have meaning – a rationally sought end or goal within a certain context requires certain conditions, one of which is this (human *ergon*). In order to judge the goodness or badness of any action is to require a context and an end and context for grounding in either one (good/bad); and remember, if man is a political animal, the same kind of Communal Good Life the local standards for which shape the contours of the form they judge good and thereby help *man* move towards his own perfection according to his nature in good form, the likes of which MacIntyre refers to Wendell Berry as one whose life instantiates and whose work illustrates what MacIntyre judges as the best.³⁵

³⁵ MacIntyre, Alasdair. "The Privatization of the Good." *The Review of Politics*. (Summer 1990) 360

Rationality is thought to be *Noetic* and directed toward a communal life, motivated by the good inherent not only in a sustainable future that unfolds from a tradition of virtue, but of equal or more importance for reasons that shall follow, is motivated by the internal goods to these virtue-acquiring practices, each of which is determined by the standards of justice in a good community and a just position in relation to all else.

Given that the crisis of Modernity is at hand, and the degree of difficulty with which we toil in pursuit of solutions, it is the remarkable work of Alasdair MacIntyre that provides those of us still paying attention, some comfort, as his contribution is constructive, insofar as it “help[s] us recover the resources constitutive of our ability to act intelligibly,” through participating in those “forms of life that can sustain lives well lived.”³⁶

In the following we will see through MacIntyre’s illustration of the *ergon* that he does exactly as Hauerwas says a “philosopher should” insofar as he articulates the basic concepts as they are embodied within the practices that comprise a particular way of life that helps us live “morally worthy lives,”³⁷ Among the more astute readers, one might enquire into what exactly characterizes a “morally worthy” life? And so, to even begin answering this question, one is required to explain that end by which the standard of all actions are measured---the *ergon*: “that thing’s good.” This means that the “function of its *ergon*,” is, “in general,” that which makes *it* what *it* is.

To now apply this specifically to *man*, it becomes readily clear that, despite the prevailing public philosophy of our time that so proudly disengages *man* from any

³⁶ Hauerwas, Stanley “The Virtues of Alasdair MacIntyre” *First Things* (2007) 5.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 1.

concept of himself as a necessarily teleological creature, who possess that natural, human desire towards what is usually understood in all its permutations, as happiness. And of these many conceptions of “happiness,” we might ask of ourselves which one is it, exactly, that characterizes this particular version of “happiness” that we find ourselves pursuing?

This question will require more to answer, so we will do well now, to begin in the general by first mentioning that MacIntyre’s concept of selfhood requires the subject (or otherwise put *plain person*) of a narrative, that runs from one’s birth to one’s death, whereby his actions and experiences the totality of which compose this narratable life. And this kind of a life requires for one to regularly ask oneself, “What is the good for man?” and from asking this, to moving beyond the broadness of this more theoretically oriented question, and towards a narrowing of the scope by again asking oneself a question, yet this time, directing it towards the particular, not towards the general, as this general understanding of *man’s* good in general is already well known and therefore established as the broader (and obviously) therefore more general parameters of the scheme. This “narrative quest” is always an education both as to the character of that which is sought and in the acquisition of the self-knowledge itself. It is from this that the “virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter,” and as a result furnishes

each, and every one, of us with an experiential basis for both self-knowledge and the knowledge of the good.³⁸

It is observable from the many notable features of our current intrigue, that this education provides among other things a sound set of first principles upon which to more easily develop the necessary habits constitutive of a particular form of life, the whole (or entirety) of which pursues the good in general, and his good in particular. This occurs according to a theoretical framework that structures the agents' conceptual apparatus in such a way, that it retains the first principles' proper position, and kept in continual volley, as these practices operate according to them as they are those constitutive of that way of life fitting to that operative conceptual framework, and are therefore, thereafter kept in movement directed towards its proper end—that proper end is of the human life in general, all the while pursuing his particular good (since it is no different from the general good). This, if properly conceived, has a trajectory that does, to a significant extent, remain structurally identical to that of Aristotelian virtue theory.

This theoretical capacity simultaneously reaches back into the agent's relevant, operative knowledge and action, through that Aristotelian model, and in order for one to do as the above outlines, they might need to root themselves in the ordinary activities of personal, familial, and social life, within which 'one inescapably discovers oneself as a being within norm-governed direction towards goals "thereby recognized as goods" whereby these *inclinations* reveal the precepts of the natural law, and their claim to legitimate authority over our bodies, minds, and action. So, given the above, if we are

³⁸ Bergman, Roger. "Teaching Justice after MacIntyre." *Catholic Education A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 12:1 (Sep2008) 11-12.

paying attention to the intrinsic requirements of human interactions in our ordinary lives, we also learn those precepts of this natural law.

With the substance of the immediately previous in play, the importance of what follows is still obvious to those of us who understand the fundamental purpose of the general rules (as our training wheels essentially) for beginners, and each of the subsequent practice(s) by each *plain person* comprising these activities, as these tend towards deeper and broader understandings of these rules. These rules become those standards of behavior serving as those constitutive features of movement, that remain directed away from those tendencies characteristic of new, and morally vulnerable, practitioners. It is the aim of such pursuits to acquire the full apprehension of the rules themselves and the significance of the rules in relation to the various standards of excellence determined by the limitations of space, time, knowledge, and etc. as these exist from within the form of this full range of activities coupled with *nous* and *phronesis* as each undertakes its own specific function within the activities constitutive of that full range of challenges as these tend to emerge from within any and all forms of serious practices directed towards the pursuit of that which is not only good for *man* (or *plain person*) in general (*theoria* or *nous*), but that which is good for this *plain person* in particular. There are for the sake of the right kind of disposition towards action itself two questions: Beginning with the questions of, “How does the plain person make of the ends which are his by nature ends actually and rationally directive of his activities?” And (2)

...in what social contexts do plain persons learn how to order ends rightly and to recognize their mistakes when they have failed to do so? Both these questions lead to a third broader question in a way comprising both ‘How does the natural law come to be recognized and intelligently practiced?’ The answer for the former question is that we do so by being

taught by those more expert than ourselves how to pay attention to and how to think about our activities ...hence, through a process of learning, making mistakes, correcting those mistakes, and so moving toward the achievement of excellence, the individual comes to understand himself as *in via*, in the middle of a journey [One's life is a developmental project].³⁹

These *plain persons* are persons characterized by their everyday practices, those practices necessary for "sustaining families, schools, and local forums of political community," all of which endow them with certain skills, especially as regards the trades and crafts---the practices internal to "sustaining a common life." These activities are those which further the practitioner's recognition of the principles of natural law. Hence, "from beginning to end MacIntyre has attempted to help us locate those forms of life that can sustain lives well lived."⁴⁰

The descriptions through which he articulates the imagery calls forth conceptions of the timelessness of "plain persons" in all times and all places, just as in their ordinary activities of personal, familial, and social life, 'one inescapably discovers oneself as a being moving through human life in a norm-governed direction as this moves towards goals which are thereby recognized as goods,' and it is in virtue of our relationship with that which he refers to as *inclinations* which partially define our nature as human agents, and that the precepts of the natural law are therefore so-called eternal.

Therefore, if we are to pay attention to these intrinsic requirements of human interactions as they emerge, and/or are, and will be, forever embedded within the fabric of ordinary human experiences as it constitutes our ordinary lives, we will ceaselessly

³⁹ Bergman, Roger, 9-10).

⁴⁰ Hauerwas, Stanley 5.

idle attuned to whatever fosters the human acquisition, these precepts of natural law provide through this, if we're concerning ourselves with this very kind of participation.

[I]t is through the initiation into the ordered relationships of some particular practice or practices, through education into the skills and virtues in which it or they require, and through an understanding of the relationship of those skills and virtues to the achievement of the goods internal to that practice or those practices that we first find its application in everyday life.⁴¹

We learn by doing and by reflecting on that doing in concert with others. This kind of “doing,” coupled with this kind of “reflecting” on “that doing” in concert with others” is, as it turns out, precisely how we, by nature, come to most effectively “learn to distinguish what pleases me here and now from what makes for excellence in pursuit of the goods internal to the practice” in which I am engaged. The second we learn how to distinguish what is good unqualifiedly from what is good for me here and now.⁴²

“The flourishing of the virtues” requires and in turn “sustains a certain kind of community, necessarily a small-scale community, within which the goods of various practices are ordered, so that, as far as possible, regard for each finds its due place with the lives of each individual, or each household, and in the life of the community writ large. Implicitly or explicitly, it is always by reference to some conception of the overall and final human good that other goods are ordered, the life of every individual, household or community by its orderings giving expression to some conception of the human good. And so it is, when goods are ordered in terms of an adequate conception of human good

⁴¹ Bergman, Roger, 9.

⁴² MacIntyre, Alasdair. The MacIntyre Reader. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998, 140.

that the virtues genuinely flourish. Hence, in Aristotelian terms, “Politics” is “the set of activities through which goods are ordered in the life of the community.”⁴³

MacIntyre’s Ergon

For Aquinas, as for Aristotle, we can only understand the right in the light afforded by the good. The good for the members of each species is that end to which, qua members of that species, those members move in achieving their specific perfection. The rules for right action for rational animals are those rules intentional conformity to which is required if their specific perfection is to be achieved.

The content of those rules, their exceptionless character and their authority all derive from the end which obedience to them serves. But they are not to be understood as specifying types of actions the performance of which as a matter of merely contingent fact will bring about some particular type of end-state. They are not specifications of means *externally* related to an end. They are rather rules partially constitutive of a form of life, the living out of which is the peculiar function of human beings as rational animals, and the completion of which lies in the activity which is itself supreme happiness and which makes of the life of which it is the completion a happy life.⁴⁴

Each of us learns how to articulate his or her own initial inner capacity for comprehending what the good is in the course of also learning from others about rules and about virtues, so that through a dialectical process of questioning the ways in which rules, virtues, goods, and *the* good are interrelated, we gradually come to understand the unity of the deductive structures of practical reasoning...to the extent to which we ignore or put out of mind or otherwise fail to take account of the distinctive character of the human good, to that extent we shall be unable to provide an adequate

⁴³ Hauerwas, Stanley, 5.

⁴⁴ MacIntyre, Alasdair. The Privatization of the Good, 344-77.

determinate or authoritative formulation of those same rules. Adequate knowledge of moral rules is inseparable from and cannot be had without genuine knowledge of human good...It follows that on any substantively Aristotelian or Thomistic view rational agreement on moral rules always presupposes rational agreement on the nature of the human good. Any political society therefore, which possesses a shared stock of adequately determinate and rationally defensible moral rules, publicly recognized to be the rules to which characteristically and generally unproblematic appeals may be made, will therefore, implicitly or explicitly, be committed to an adequately determinate and rationally justifiable conception of the human good. And insofar as the rational justification of particular moral stances is a feature of its public life, that conception will have had to be made explicit in a way and to a degree which will render general allegiance to that particular conception itself a matter of public concern.⁴⁵

All the virtues, moral as well as intellectual, have to be developed throughout one's entire life. And this development requires a lifelong process of learning and imparting truths, learning in which reflection upon experience needs initially to be guided by teachers who enable one to learn from experience and so, later on in one's interactions with others, to contribute to their learning as well as to one's own, and in so doing to learn from them. So mutual relationships of teaching and learning inform all well-ordered relationships and consistent truthfulness is therefore an essential ingredient of all such relationships.

There is an informative analogy between the high value which the modern scientific community sets on truthfulness within the community of scientific enquirers, a value expressed in the penalties imposed upon those who falsify data, and the value which, on a Thomistic view, is to be set on truthfulness within any human community. For, on a Thomistic view, every human community is a community of practical enquiry, the subject-matter of whose enquiry consists of everything actually and potentially relevant to the relationship of the individuals who compose it and of the community itself

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 345.

to its and their good. Hence, it is precisely as enquirers, as rational beings, that the truth is part of what we owe to one another. And this enquiry is lifelong, having at each particular stage of life its own peculiar task, tasks which involve the contribution that those at each such stage have to make both to each other and to those at other stages of life.

In order to tie any remaining loose ends, prior to advancing the argument, let us briefly acquaint ourselves with a section of Bergman's paper, *Teaching Justice After MacIntyre*. In the section titled: *How Does MacIntyre Understand the Moral Self?*, he argues that MacIntyre's central thesis is that *man* is in his actions and practice a story-telling animal for any person to answer the question: "What am I to do?" That is, if I can answer the prior question: "to what story or stories do I find myself a part?" Indeed, from this we can therefore see that "MacIntyre's concept of selfhood requires the subject of a narrative running from one's birth to one's death [who] is...accountable for the actions and experiences which compose a narratable life."⁴⁶ "What is the good for man?" indicates "a narrative quest" that "is always an education both as to the character of that which is sought and in self-knowledge." This perspective on the narrative unity of a human life suggests a new definition of the virtues.

The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Bergman, Roger, 1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 12.

We now turn our attention, in Chapter III, to understanding the moral character of plain persons, with special emphasis on moral epistemology, character formation, otherwise known as education.

CHAPTER III
THE MORAL PHILOSOPHER'S REFLECTIONS ON THE PLAIN PERSON'S
MATURE MORAL CHARACTER

I will begin this first portion of a four-portioned, Chapter II of this thesis, for reasons soon to become clear, by trying my hand at illustrating as best as I can for the reader, several of the more significant features found to characterize these persons, these *plain persons*, so affectionately championed by some of our most highly-esteemed, contemporary moral philosophers. If (or since) the intelligibility of an action is prior to any action itself, it would do us well to show the good reason why so much investment was directed towards the preparation for placing the moral epistemological discussion within the context that it here has; and all that remains to be mentioned is that, insofar as this project succeeds, it has done so by virtue of the efforts applied to optimizing its intelligibility.

Hence, the *plain person* is the instantiation of Alasdair MacIntyre's *good life*, and this good life consists of the *plain person* working to fulfill his *telos* by living in such a way as to satisfy the required criteria for his human *ergon*. From here the challenge becomes for him to understand the importance of early moral education for the purposes of sustaining the tradition that is his way of life; and the method that makes most sense in the effort to safeguard his tradition is by sharing what he knows of the most essential things with those whose very existence owes itself to the preservation of the very way of

life which is currently in question – his posterity, who have not, as of yet, been brought to light.

This particular view is dealt with quite directly by Alasdair MacIntyre. We owe things to our elders, and we owe things to our young, and we owe things to those generations yet to come; so different persons in different stages of life have a naturally rooted obligation to share that which is necessary with those with whom they share in the goodness of their shared culture. This particular type of cultural perpetuation appears less ideological, less imperial, and more essentially natural, insofar as everyone retains his virtue. These shared obligations, differentially present through different life stages, thus imply that sustaining the shared community is part of the requirement of the human *ergon*, part of the good life.

Plato expressed that “[t]he little human animal will not at first have the right responses. It must be trained to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likable, disgusting, and hateful.”⁴⁸ Like Aristotle’s child, Plato’s child will have cultivated, from his earliest days, an affinity for beauty and a distaste for that which is not, so that with maturity, “when Reason at length comes to him, then, bred as he has been, he will hold out his hands in welcome and recognize her because of the affinity he bears to her.”

At some early point within this window of intellectual development, the children begin developing certain *generally acquired* goods (or skills)--those goods and skills good for human life generally--as well as *particular* goods (and/or skills)--those goods and skills particular to their own situations. It is these rewards of character, earned

⁴⁸ Lewis, C.S. *The Abolition of Man*. San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2000, 16.

through deliberate choice with a view to responsibility, and the discipline acquired through excellence in practice, and etc., that, for the sake of good household management, civic virtue, and so forth, as these tend to serve as practical experience whereby (or through which) certain goods and skills are acquired and developed (or refined) – insofar as they maintain a view towards the good.

As the child matures, his guardian's estimation of his capacities should allow him more latitude insofar as his guardian (mother/father) deems suitable. One can only speculate on the reasonableness and competency of any particular individual entrusted with the upbringing and education of a child. It is hoped, however, that giving a child as much latitude as his guardian judges him capable of conscientiously discharging, will endow him with the opportunity to develop his human capital in the form of "skills" and "experiences" which will serve him well in the attainment of his own good. However, to measure this against ambitions of excellence we discover that there is much yet requiring mention for both the internal qualities of the students themselves, as well as those necessary, internal qualities of teachers, and the qualitative wholeness of the formal educative process (and we cannot forget the importance of a good environment).

What I hope to accomplish in this first section is to articulate as best as I possibly can, the general framework for the kind of experience(s) and process(es) of experience understood to comprise the way the children learn to approach life, a way of actually living. This is inherently limited as it emerges from within the scope of a child's own particular story, his own experiences, and his own narrative. His story, as with the stories of so many, is a story linked to other stories among other stories—all of which, if united

under an ever-more comprehensive narrative will, when coupled, constitute an even more comprehensive story (or narrative unity).

The reason for such an approach is that it will, in due course, reveal a suitable framework for our unfolding discussion. It is absolutely necessary that actions remain intelligible, and this requires that each action have an end towards which it moves and from which it derives intelligibility, and a description (narrative, or story) that articulates this intelligibility. This is, in other words, a tentative affirmation of the circulating commentary as it perpetually wisps among the many other dialogic events held in the many places, such as many of our contemporary liberal arts colleges, and/or any political or philosophical seminar or conference, that have, and do at least at times admit of more agreement on the answer to the question concerning whether or not any obligations exist antecedent to choice. MacIntyre's response would be, "Yes," as we are all *dependent rational animals*, and the rational purpose for constructing a theoretical or a practical (normative) structure is implied by the necessary subject of philosophy – the *plain person*.

"[T]he concept of an intelligible action is a more fundamental concept than that of an action."⁴⁹ While this may seem a small philosophical point, it is also true that the measure of everything rests upon it. It was Aristotle's account of the virtues and of practical reason that imbued MacIntyre with not only an understanding of the necessary conditions for the intelligibility of our actions, but also of his claim that the concept of an intelligible action is actually, contrary to those voicing a loyalty to action itself,

⁴⁹ Hauerwas, Stanley, 2.

dependent upon an end towards which we *will*. Aristotle provides an account of why our actions require a conception of an end as well as of the social and political conditions necessary to sustain a life formed by the virtues constitutive of that end.⁵⁰

It is through these practices that a child develops moral capacities and a mature character; and it is here that we must examine the process through which the *plain person* reconciles his *natural ends*, as well as the social contexts through which he learns to correctly order those ends and to recognize mistakes which lead to failure to acknowledge them as such. This is achieved through the types of activities which aim to answer the question, “What is my good?”

Let us take a closer look at what, exactly, it is that moral philosophers are referring to, as well as what it is about these *plain persons*, and the way in which these *plain persons* go about their daily lives, that makes them so surprisingly important to these moral philosophers so as to literally inspire *their own* reflection into reconsiderations of the status (or standing) of *their own* particular relationships within the world of *their own* experience, from within *their own* situatedness, within *their own* particular place and time.

Let us now move to the next stage of this thesis (Chapters IV and V), within which it will be the author’s task to show, on a philosophical level, just how Wendell Berry instantiates Alasdair MacIntyre’s *good life*, as this will serve us well in the closing chapter of this manuscript (Chapter VI) when your author then attempts to show how, if he applies what becomes apparent in Dr. Carson’s *Learning and Reference*, from her “*Meaning and the Learning Process*,” concerning “*informal procedures*,” that *maxims of reflection and principles of revision*, to general observations of human actions with a

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 2.

view to moral value, we will find that through the structures of these *informal procedures* (*maxims of reflection and principles of revision*), the emergence of a kind of relationship of the mind between Aristotle, Aquinas, Berry, and Carson.

CHAPTER IV
BERRY'S GOOD LIFE AIMS TOWARD THE HUMAN ERGON AS
ENVISIONED BY MACINTYRE

Only when our acts are empowered with more than bodily strength do we need to think of limits. It was not thought or word that called culture into being, but a tool or a weapon. After the stone axe we needed song and story to remember innocence, to record effect – and so to describe the limits, to say what can be done without damage. The use only of our bodies for work or love or pleasure, or even for combat, sets us free again in the wilderness, and we exult. But a man with a machine and inadequate culture...is a pestilence. He shakes more than he can hold.⁵¹

As would be consistent with natural law, Wendell Berry reproaches us that in order to achieve the *good life*, we must recognize and reconcile ourselves to our own limitations as prescribed by nature herself. To consider these limitations, let us begin at a point just beyond our commonly understood bodily limitations, so as to more quickly grapple with those limitations imposed by the locality of which we are a part---the communities within which we exist, the natural world upon which we depend for subsistence, and, perhaps most significantly, those limits imposed on us by our own human nature.

These limitations require us to self-consciously adapt ourselves to those particularities of locale through those practices, those activities of necessity, since it is this (the necessity) that gives reason for their emergence (as activities) from within that

⁵¹ Berry, Wendell. What are People For? New York North Point Press, 1990, 8.

way of life, the form of which is constitutive of the pursuit of that which is understood as the human *ergon*.

This *ergon* is the standard against which every human action or series of actions should face measure--and while the many permutations of subordinate goods are diverse, amid this diversity are still those universal principles which demand certain standards of action. These standards for *man*, as set out before us in the formal understanding of the human *ergon* set the requirements that we all must recognize those drives within us that drive us toward this *ergon*, in the senses of both the universal and the particular.

Hence, it should be no surprise that the fulfillment of the human *ergon*, as it accords with each person's own necessity, demands of every one of us that we treat the land upon which we live and from which we procure sustenance, with due respect. While our capacities are quite impressive in themselves, the results of our endeavors are not, and they quite often involve significant risks, especially as they pertain to use of these resources that sustain life. What is required is conscientious use, as it is true that many forms of irresponsibility, especially as it pertains to use could very well, in the end, engender our own undoing.

The above clearly allows us to recognize and hold dear the unique character of that place in which each of us lives out our lives through the activities we conceive of as those which lead us to our own particular good ends. For this, the imagination, in Berry's view, is a vital feature of the human capacity as it discerns the *place* which each of us inhabits, as well as those responsibilities each of us holds in his "relationship to the world." And, this awareness of place is that which provides the necessary knowledge which enables each of us to adapt to the unique locale we call home, to care for it in the

specific ways it requires, and to appreciate that about the place which demands these things, as it is only the possession of this kind of genuine affection that imbues one with the *desire to undertake the necessary work*---in pursuit of the right thing, at the right time, in the right way, for the right reasons, as well as with (and/or for) the right person(s).

This expresses that quality of character which best attests to that *kind* of moral character (or moral disposition), the likes of which, it is my contention, is easily discernible within two of the above-told stories---one by Kennedy and the other by Berry. Kennedy as a thoughtful teacher, and Berry as a thoughtful farmer, each tells his own story from his own respective vantage point. Each man's story comes to life with the kinds of details indicative of one motivated by a certain "awareness of place;" such a sensitivity is a virtue insofar as it is exercised with a view to the good.

As each storyteller shares his own unique story articulated in particular detail, and while each focused on different pursuits, they share something of a crucial nature – and of a virtuous nature). In other words, despite the difference in language and focal point, between these two, the attentive reader discerns a special quality shared by both, a passion for the life towards which he has determined as his own good end – both directed at their own type of nurture, whether with Kennedy's ideas concerning prospective approaches to dialogue with children (practiced in view of its importance for the successful transmission of a discourse tradition) through which the young minds are tended, exactly as needed to flourish according to their nature, with the right tools, or, with the family, the animals, and the plants Berry tends with such genuine affection. This quality that they share is essential for virtue, and has everything to do with an awareness

(or sensitivity) to one's own "relationship to the world," especially with the associated responsibilities consistent with the *good* for each and for all.

By recognizing, accepting, and respecting the particularities of our personal localities, we also acknowledge the responsibility to nurture it in the special ways it requires, and we resist the urge to exceed the limits required of us to try to restructure the land to fit our ideals of some perceived paradise on earth, an activity which will prove, with the passage of time, to be unsustainable and destructive of our very source of life.

Such affectionate acceptance makes itself apparent "as imagination enables sympathy, sympathy enables affections. And in affection we find the possibility of a neighborly, kind, and conserving economy." While admitting that some will criticize him as being guilty of relativism, he asserts that the truth of this lies in the fact that "[w]e should, as our culture has warned us over and over again, give our affection to things that are true, just, and beautiful"⁵²

The Farm and the Family

Berry sees the small family farm as a microcosm of the virtuous community he envisions. It instantiates the cycle of reproduction as it is acted out in the daily lives of the members of the farm family; and we see that it is the function of their activities to sustain this cyclical process, which then in turns facilitates the continued activity of the family members and the activity of their progeny.

It is here, within the embrace of the affectionate, nurturing embrace of the family, that the activities conducive to the members' comprehension of *man's ergon*, and through

⁵² Berry, Wendell. It All Turns on Affection: The Jefferson Lectures. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2012, 14-15.

this his own particular *ergon*; and it is structure of the family which provides the space required for each person to remain free to pursue his envisioned *good* through the carrying out of that work, those chores, which are necessary to his movement toward his own *good*. Everyone (including young children) has responsibilities to fulfill—those chores by which the young learn the practical knowledge needed to continue such a life. At the same time, these chores initiate an understanding and development of the specific virtues and skills which will enable them, as they become adults themselves, to determine those things which will continue to facilitate their movement toward their own *good end*.

The family farm is “[I]ike a household, it is a human organism, and has its origin in both nature and culture...[it] is a part of an ancient pattern of values, ideas, aspirations, attitudes, faiths, knowledge(s), and skills that propose and support the sound establishment of a people on the land. To defend the small farm is to defend a large part, and the best part, of our cultural inheritance”⁵³

An essential task of the members of the farm family is to partake in those activities which are intended to maintain the health of each of its members, including its nonhuman members. And it is in this that we are able to see the cyclic nature of these activities demonstrated. The farmer performs those activities required to coax sustenance for himself and his family from the land, and the sustenance gained through these activities in turn enables the farm family, and thereby their progeny, to continue with those activities, and so on.

This brings us to the idea of complete action, an action, according to Berry

⁵³ Berry, Wendell. The Gift of Good Land. New York: North Point Press, 1982, xvii.

...which one takes on one's own behalf, which is particular and complex, real not symbolic, which one can both accomplish on one's own and take full responsibility for. There are perhaps many such action, but certainly among them is any sort of home production⁵⁴

Farming (and on a smaller scale gardening) and the activities of home production associated with this way of life, provide its practitioners with an independence not to be found in our modern modes of living. In the first place, it "gives interest a place, and it proves one's place interesting and worthy of interest."⁵⁵

Through the activities involved in working the land, the human body is restored to its usefulness; it is given "the dignity of working in its own support," and through this maintaining its own health. These activities provide the necessities for the individual's physical, emotional, and intellectual well-being. It is also these activities which contribute to physical strength and health, while at the same time it presents "the finest sort of challenge to the intelligence... [as] it is not a discipline that can be learned once for all, but keeps presenting problems that must be directly dealt with."⁵⁶

This illustrates again the cyclic nature of these processes, as we see that the activities which connected with sustainability educate us in the necessities of sustainability. Hence, as we become more self-sufficient, our understanding of the world becomes better suited to the activities to which we are devoting our energies. Through working the earth in such sustainable ways, we begin to comprehend in a true sense that the *potential* bounty of the earth is unlimited if we practice moderation, responsible use,

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 165.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, 165-68.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 165-68

care, and attention in order to become the correct type of stewards to safeguard and enable this potential.

We learn from our gardens [and farms] to deal with the most urgent question of the time: How much is enough?...our goal is *enough*, and we know that *enough* requires a modest, moderate, conserving technology....Enough is everlasting. Too much, despite all the ballyhoo about 'limitless growth,' is temporary.⁵⁷

So, we begin to understand that all of our actions, whether they are actions of production, or actions of consumption, become a part of that cumulative action which allows us as individuals, a small farming community, or as a community of life living on earth, which contributes to or subtracts from the ability of the earth to sustain life.

The activities conducive to the health of the farm require that the farmer requires a sort of flexibility and ability to reason regarding the particularities of any given situation in order to determine the correct course of action to facilitate the desired end.

This requires the farmer, unlike the specialist of Modernity, to take on a variety of roles, to constantly reevaluate and adjust his understanding, and thereby adjust his action.

Again, we see the cyclic nature of things.

The farmer, sometimes known as husbandman, is by definition half mother...And the land itself is not mother or father only, but both...Farmer and land are thus involved in a sort of dance in which the partners are always at opposite sexual poles, and the lead keeps changing: the farmer, as seed-bearer, causes growth: the land, as seed-bearer, causes the harvest...Neither nature nor people alone can produce human sustenance, but only the two together, culturally wedded.⁵⁸(

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 168.

⁵⁸ Berry, Wendell. The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1977, 8-9.

The good farmer, as should *man*, recognizes his interconnectedness—the dependence he has on the natural world around him for his sustenance.

He is also a “cultural product”, the result of the experience and knowledge acquired by the generations which preceded him. This is an education which relies on succession—that is, it requires “settled household, friendships, and communities” to function as the receptacles in which this experience and knowledge, which is concerned with both the general good and the particular good, is contained and preserved as well as the conduit through which it is passed.⁵⁹

In the earliest years of childhood, it is the household which makes this body of knowledge available and which provides the foundation for the practice of activities directed towards *the good*. It is through the chores assigned to him and the observations he makes as he watches the adults go about their own activities, that he begins to understand and acquire discipline; and the concept of “correct discipline” is inseparable from the notion of “enough time.” “Correct discipline” necessitates patience – it cannot be hurried; and it is “correct discipline” in submission to this patience which provides the basis for a thing to be done properly. This discipline and patience apply not only to the activity itself, but also to the observable outcome of the activity.

A vine does not produce grapes overnight; one must patiently and conscientiously tend the plants before fruit is seen. The same applies to those activities which are directed toward the healing of the land. Land made infertile through overuse or bad farming might require years of attention before fertility is regained. For this reason, as

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 45.

well, it is important that one stay rooted. “One must stay to experience and study and understand the consequences—must understand them by living with them, and then, if necessary, by longer living and more work.”⁶⁰

There is another sense in which the home life of the farm is essential to a child’s moral development. As discussed previously, this is a way of life consisting of “family work;” and the associated elaboration of such chores and obligations provides the framework which strengthens “the bonds of interest, loyalty, affection, and cooperation that keep families together.”⁶¹ Berry gives the example of the mid-20th century rural community where his grandparents lived out their lives. He witnessed how the children’s participation in the family economy was instrumental to their learning about the adult world, and through which they were taught to appreciate such virtues as thrift. This, he argues, is “a much more effective, because pleasurable, and a much cheaper method than the present one of requiring the adult world to be learned in the abstract in school.”

So we see that in addition to providing for the sustenance and health of the family, the life of the family farm is also central to the early education of the children who live on it. This is an education which takes place in a loving and stable environment, through teachers who have the best hopes and intentions for the child, in a ‘school’ of which the child will be a part for life.

⁶⁰ Berry, Wendell. The Art of the Commonplace. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2002, 187.

⁶¹ Berry, Wendell. The Gift of Good Land, 99.

Community

A healthy family and farm life is good beyond the good of the family, however, in that a community consisting of such healthy households is necessary for the existence of a thriving, productive, self-sustaining, virtuous community. Such a community is composed of members of who are aligned together in activity and conversation directed toward the good of the *entire* community, a community composed of not merely the human members, but also the various creatures which share in the bounty of the land, as well as the foundation of all life on earth, the land itself. As we go about our lives, we must consider the effects of our actions upon the place itself, including its soil, water, air.

If the place is well preserved, if its entire membership, natural and human, is present in it, and if the human economy is in practical harmony with the nature of the place, then the community is healthy. A diseased community will be suffering natural losses that become, in turn, human losses. A healthy community is sustainable; it is, within reasonable limits, self-sufficient and, within reasonable limits, self-determined⁶²

This ‘harmony,’ Berry tells us, is very similar to what is known as ‘moral law,’ which in turn is a “significant part of the notation of ecological and agricultural harmony.”⁶³ This is a thoughtful way of life, with its basis in virtue enacted through activities directed toward *the good end*.

According to MacIntyre, if one’s character is to develop beyond its “initial animal condition into that of [an] independent rational agent,” he must possess the necessary virtues to “confront and respond to vulnerability and disability” in himself, as well as in others. These necessary virtues are “the distinctive virtues of dependent rational animals,

⁶² Berry, Wendell. The Art of the Commonplace, 192.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 192.

whose dependence, rationality, and animality have to be understood in relationship to each other.”⁶⁴ As we have seen, MacIntyre saw community as playing an *essential* role in *man*’s attempts to understand *the good* and those specific activities which are most likely to facilitate this pursuit. He, like Berry, stressed the necessity for individuals to recognize their dependence.

I shall argue that the virtues of independent rational agency need for their adequate exercise to be accompanied by what I shall call the virtues of acknowledged dependence and that a failure to understand this is apt to obscure some features of rational agency. Moreover both sets of virtues are needed in order to actualize the distinctive potentialities that are specific to the human rational animal. Identifying why and how they are needed is a prerequisite for understanding their essential place in the kind of human life through which human flourishing can be achieved⁶⁵

In other words, a specific type of conception of the common good is going to be required if the social group is going to be the community that its members need it to be.

In order to pay due heed and respect to the inherent value of each member of the community, which is something Berry considers a necessary virtue in the individual’s development of good character and appropriate knowledge, he must see beyond himself and accept for himself the responsibility to be a good and generous neighbor. In a very definite sense, every individual is working for himself and for his own family specifically; but it is crucial, that we each acknowledge the debt we owe to our *entire* local community. Such a community expects certain virtues of character from its members—virtues that are beneficial and necessary for the preservation of the special refuge the community is intended to be for its members—specifically those of “charity,

⁶⁴ MacIntyre, Alasdair. Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues. Chicago: Open Court, 1999, 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 5.

neighborliness, the care and instruction of the young, respect for the old; thus it assures its integrity and survival. Above all, it requires good stewardship of the land, for the community.⁶⁶

In order to be truly self-sufficient with regards to such things as “food, energy, pleasure, and other basic requirements,”⁶⁷ it is necessary that the community add value to local products in order to supply the requirements of its members. This requires workers/producers other than farmers. However, members of Berry’s community “are *never* only workers, but rather person, relatives, and neighbors. They work *for* those they work *among* and *with*. the work of housewives, small craftsmen, or small farmers is ruled by their own morality, skill, and intelligence.”

He does admit that such a society of individuals working independently from home will lack a certain sort of “organizational efficiency and economies of scale;” but this lack of efficiency will be more than compensated for in the “fulfilled humanity of the workers, who then bring to their work...qualities such as independence, skill, intelligence, judgment, pride, respect, loyalty, love, reverence.”⁶⁸

A key feature of Berry’s ideal community, a feature that is born of necessity, with the added benefit that it plays a key role by ensuring quality of the products, is that those who produce the local products also use the product. A further motivation to produce items of quality is that the intended customer for a local producer is the local population. In a small community, these are likely to be neighbors and those for whom the producer

⁶⁶ Berry, Wendell. The Gift of Good Land, 261.

⁶⁷ Berry, Wendell. The Art of the Commonplace, 203.

⁶⁸ Berry, Wendell. The Gift of Good Land, 110.

is likely to hold esteem; and just as important, these are the same people whose esteem will likely be of great importance to him. These complimentary factors result in the small, independent producers demonstrating as much, if not more concern “for quality as for quantity.” Here we see *phronesis* embodied in the particular individual activities which are also a piece of the communal sphere of activity whereby each person contributes his part in the community’s movement toward *the good*.

Berry’s description of this community rooting itself in a common desire to direct itself toward *the good* is illustrative of a community focused on work. It seems, then, that work must play some significant role in this pursuit of *the good*. What, then, are we to make of our Modern society’s drive to diminish the amount of work required of us? Why, we might ask ourselves, is work so important? Why is contemporary society’s contempt for the idea of work so incompatible with our *good*, our *ergon*? The reason it is wrong is because work is what keeps us physically strong, and this physical strength is what endows us with health. It also consists of a duty owed by each member of the good society to every other member, for it is only by the work of each in concert with every other that the community is able to function in a way that promotes its *good*.

As I hope I have made clear, no farmer or family is completely independent – all depend on community; and if the individual farms and their members are in good health, they are able to undertake the responsibility they each hold toward the community. And, as we discussed above, it is the work of the farm that keeps its members in good health. The work itself keeps our bodies trim and strong in addition to maintaining the health of the land and the tending of crops to provide the good, healthful food which provides sustenance and contributes to our health.

Berry sees health, of the body, the community, the land, and the other creatures who share the land and its bounty with us, as the ultimate good, and this can only be maximized through the sometimes difficult work of care/nurture, thrift, and cooperating with our neighbors and local community.

The community also plays a significant role in the education of its children. The most fundamental way this occurs is through the community's memory and its tradition, which is the embodiment of that memory. A community which treasures and transmits this memory to its young is a community in which its members also know one another's stories; and it is such knowledge of one another that allows for trust. Why is this important? Because "[p]eople who do not trust one another do not help one another, and moreover they fear one another."⁶⁹

It is only through a love of learning, the cultural tradition, and through excellence, as well as a sense of love for place and community, that education can make sense. Without love, "education is only the importation into a local community of centrally prescribed 'career preparation' designed to facilitate the export of young careerists."⁷⁰ For Berry, affection is key—Think about the body of students being instructed together by one teacher year after year and how this is intended to enhance discussion, reasoning, etc. within an environment of love and trust.

⁶⁹ Berry, Wendell. What are People For? 157.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 165.

The Land

So, we see that Berry conceives of health as the ultimate human *good*. Human health, though, is not the end; it is good because it endows *man* with the stamina and strength to do what only he can—to do the work necessary to fulfill his duty as steward of the land. *Man's* health is that which enables him to perform those tasks which maintain the health of the land, which in turn provides that which sustains *man*. Thus we come to understand that the health *man's* work brings about extends far beyond the health of any individual man to encompass the health man's fellow creatures, the plants, and most essentially, the land on which all other life depends.

In speaking of community, then, we are speaking of a complex connection not only among human beings or between humans and their homeland but also between the human economy and nature, between forests or prairie and field or orchard, and between troublesome creatures and pleasant ones. *All* neighbors are included.⁷¹

Just as he broadens our sense of the meaning of health, Berry also aims to broaden our conception of the sense of 'economy.' He challenges us to see the term in a new context, one which asserts is its proper context, that of household management which, "[b]y extension...refers to the husbanding of all the goods by which we live. An authentic economy, if we had one, would define and make, on the terms of thrift and affection, our connections to nature and to one another."⁷²

And this leads us back to that virtue on which Berry places special esteem, the virtue of affection. This is the virtue responsible for the steadfastness demonstrated in

⁷¹ Berry, Wendell. The Art of the Commonplace, 202-03.

⁷² Berry, Wendell. It All Turns on Affection, 20.

those individuals who stick to their home in their desire to save it, to maintain its vitality, even in the face of its degradation. He admonishes us that “we endangered ourselves first of all by dismissing affection as an honorable and necessary motive...I do not believe...that morality, even religious morality, is an adequate motive for good care of the land-community. The *primary* motive for good care and good use is always going to be affection, because affection involves us entirely.”⁷³

In the living out of this type of life, one is required to play a multiplicity of roles. This is not the life of the specialist. The farmer must be able to play the role of nurturing mother today, while the next he is the harvester, shedding the plants he has so carefully nurtured of their precious fruit. This fluidity comes from the recognition that man and nature must cooperate in “in a sort of dance in which the partners...and the lead keeps changing: the farmer, as seed-bearer, causes growth: the land, as seed-bearer, causes the harvest...Neither nature nor people alone can produce human sustenance, but only the two together, culturally wedded.”⁷⁴

What is important to realize is that a farmer such as this, one who demonstrates the virtue of affection, is a “cultural product.” His knowledge and skill is greatly indebted to those generations who came before him and contributed to the bank of

...essential experience [that] can only be accumulated, tested, preserved, handed down in settled households, friendships, and communities that are deliberately and carefully native to their own ground, in which the past has prepared the present and the present safeguards the future ⁷⁵.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 31-32.

⁷⁴ Berry, Wendell. *The Unsettling of America*, 8-9.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 45.

CHAPTER V
A GENERAL DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE *PLAIN PERSONS*

It is through initiation into the ordered relationships of some particular practice, through education in the skills and virtues which it requires, and through an understanding of the relationship between those skills and virtues and the achievement of the goods internal to that practice, that we first find application in everyday life for just such a teleological scheme of understanding; and in doing so, we acquire the foundation for, and begin developing the capacities to think reflectively about norms and goals.

Once the *plain person* has attained understanding of first principles through “rational enquiry,” he is then able to discern between the following two choices of possibility: (1) what course of action he would take if he were to do what would please him most “here and now,” and at the same time, (2) “what course of action he should take,’ ‘in light of the best instruction available”” to him, in order to more closely aim at that which is excellent in the pursuit of the goods internal to the particular practices in which he is engaged. The *plain person* is, then, natively a philosopher of the distinction between descriptive and normative understandings. This would also require an inquiry into the unqualifiedly best course of action as a particular individual, as opposed to the best course of action in consideration of the particularities of his stage in life.

Failure to make this second distinction is characteristically a sign of failure in evaluating how far one has progressed in ordering one’s appetite

and passions, so that through a process of learning, making mistakes, correcting those mistakes, and moving towards the achievement of excellence, the individual comes to understand himself as *in via*, in the middle of a journey.⁷⁶

As he immerses himself in the specific practices in which he has engaged, he will also come to know the history of those practices, specifically in terms of the trial and errors its practitioners have undertaken in their own practices, and the development of those undertakings in order to arrive at better agreement as it concerns the ideal “goals, skills, and virtues” necessary to them--things which have been learned by those who came before him in the movement towards the perfection of the practices themselves – the goods internal to the practices.

The *plain person's* inquiry, however, cannot end here. Even as he travels the course he has set for himself, he will, and should, from time to time, ask himself again, “What is my good and to what extent have I committed myself to this good?” For if he does not, it is a sure sign that either he has already developed bad character that no longer measures standards against their own actions, or he has fallen into the bad habit of not exercising this capacity, which renders the necessary faculties impotent with respect to putting vice in check, thereby rendering his narrative defective as it reflects this influence of vice – the defective soul. The only way to track this is to measure his own qualities and achievements against the standards of excellence inherent to the course he is charting for himself.

One's life is basically the story within which one is the primary protagonist, just as is the case for every other person; and any individual's life is subject to the same

⁷⁶ MacIntyre, Alasdair. The MacIntyre Reader, 140.

limitations as any other human being of whatever time period, place, or status, thereby, vindicating, accrediting, or substantiating the sort of universal nature of human beings as *plain persons*-- we are all just moral agents embedded within contexts of meaning – each of us embodies the particularized universal.

So when we as readers or spectators put such questions to a narrative, we look for the universal in the particular... to inquiry about what from now on we are now to make of ourselves, we are compelled instead to ask of the universal how it may be particularized, how certain conceptions of *the* good and of the virtues may take on embodied form through our realization of this possibility rather than that, posing these questions in terms of the specificities of the narratives of our lives. In so doing, we characteristically draw upon resources provided by some stock of stories from which we had earlier learned to understand both our own lives and the lives of others in narrative terms.⁷⁷

In order to make such assessments, an individual must have, at a young age, developed not only a sense of narrative understanding, but at an even higher level, the “resources for right judgment and action;” and this would include the capacity for understanding the reasons for failure and how to avoid such pitfalls.

The *plain person* should aim at becoming “enough of a moral philosopher to understand her or himself, in all her or his particularities.”⁷⁸ He must also reach a level of understanding and humility at which he is able to recognize that all have something to teach and that it behooves him, as it does *every* other person, to allow himself to learn from *any* other person.

One of the first principles or precepts of natural law is to do *good* and to avoid doing evil. If a *plain person* follows natural law with its basis in the self-evident truths of

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 141.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 142.

natural law, he will understand that those things which one learns to do are to be done because they are consistent with natural law. He will, thereby, understand that his attainment of his *own* good must occur within the scope of natural law and that the rules enjoining all necessary prohibitions consistent with natural law would be rules based in, once again, self-evident truths embedded within natural law. It is thus that we discover that the rules we learn, insofar as they are good, are good because they either preserve something good in natural law or they diminish the inclinations, or any of the things that make one vulnerable to any of the natural errors into which might cause fallible and unlearned individuals to falter.

We see, then, that the rules either guide one toward what is good or away from what is bad, and as long as a given rule is consistent with nature and therefore good reason, it is a good rule that serves as the disembodied reason which guides one in determining why or why not to do a particular thing. Hence, rules consistent with natural law are rules consistent with the theory directed towards that end which gives it meaning and structure.

When one willingly subordinates himself to the rules established in view of preserving the intelligibility of a specific practice, this obedience, over time, not only shapes one's desires and appetites according to what the good rule based on good reason commands (thus working in concert with other rules and laws consistent with the tradition and/or practice), but also serves as the constant reminder of the nature of practical inquiry as it relates to man fulfilling his *telos* with a trajectory that fulfills his *ergon*.

Learning what the virtues require of us in a wide range of different situations is inseparable from learning which, out of the multiplicity of goods, is at stake in any given situation. So we go on to learn more than we initially could learn from the rules, but part of what we then learn is that we can never dispense with the rules...[T]his is...integral to our understanding of goods and of virtues as well as of the rules themselves.⁷⁹

As the *plain person* matures, he is capable of concentrated reflection by peering into the past, with the intended purpose of reviewing the mistakes that he either did or did not make, and the successes he has or has not had, with a view to cause as it concerns what either did or did not happen that lead to such results. This will lead him to understand that when he came to acknowledge certain things as goods towards which he wanted to aspire and direct his life, he had already, throughout his prior stages of moral development, acquired a sufficient supply of the intellectual virtues to recognize these as goods. As he competently draws such conclusions and to determine those goods to which he wished to apply his energies, he began to comprehend how such commitments necessitated a certain alignment of his character in accordance with the “dos and don’ts” of acquiring these specific goods.

This, then, leads us to inquire, “How does one come to this level of moral development?” The success of this process does owe something to good fortune, for it is necessary that a child find refuge under the wing of a thoughtful teacher. He must be shown how to practice the necessary activities and virtues, ideally in the absence of inculcation and dogmatism, through the simple patterns and processes commonly observed, *i.e.* the order of the cosmos. All it takes is consistent and gentle guidance, whether by parent, teacher, or kindly neighbor, to show, not what to believe, but that

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 143.

which is necessary for the child in order that he might acquire the skills for keen discernment.

The key is to facilitate access to the necessary tools for finding the answers, not the answers themselves. This is accomplished in large part by showing the child all that is operative within the numerous contexts, as well as which tricks and clues very well might demonstrate the practical skills of discernment. Furthermore, as the child is taught to direct his eye towards recognizing the good, he, through continued practice of such skills, masters those tools to more fully realize the qualities required to determine the best route by which to pursue these goods. This is critical, because “[a]lternative immediate goods must from the outset be ordered so that no lesser but more immediate good can be thought to outweigh my ultimate good.”⁸⁰

As the child attains higher levels of competence and confidence in making such evaluations of the good, he also begins to move beyond the familiar protective realm of family and teacher. We are not only protagonists in our own narratives, but the narrative of each person is interwoven with the narratives of others. As he moves outward, he will also make the acquaintance of many who hold views quite contrary to those he has come to understand as *the good*. This extension of his social experience will necessitate that he acquire a new skill, that of assessing these various relationships “in order to achieve the kind of understanding of [himself] and others without which [he] will be unable to learn what the human good is,” and whether these acquaintances are “informed by those virtues

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 151.

and governed by those rules without which the activities of inquiry will be barren.”⁸¹

These assessments happen through the use of the characterological and narrative resources of each person, including (importantly!) understanding of the telos, the good life.

As an individual comes to recognize those goods toward which he desires to orient his life, he becomes obligated to order his life in such a way that his vision is directed towards those virtues and rules that facilitate his movement toward this good. At the same time he will be required to avoid those people, activities, and goods which will divert him from his path. “This connection between what kind of person I have to become in order to achieve a given end and what the character of that given end is of course is not peculiar to this kind of inquiry. It is a connection embodied in the structure and reasoning of all practice-based activity.”⁸²

This above account provides a respectable, and therefore, somewhat valuable “specimen,” for our enquiry into *plain persons*, and the above discussion took as its form our “moral philosopher’s” favorable representation of *plain persons* (the necessary subject of philosophy), as they are imbued with the kind of good moral character we now understand as one of the necessary conditions for approximating such idyllic standards as to have confidence as moral exemplars.

Now that we have outlined a noteworthy thing or two concerning the general overall nature of the *good plain person’s* approach to the commonalities of daily life for *plain persons* (which, given the scope of this project’s purposes, are intended to show the

⁸¹ *Ibid* 151.

⁸² *Ibid*, 151.

“dependent rational animal” as MacIntyre identifies him), we will now look to the *plain persons* as the discussion admits of them in *The MacIntyre Reader*, as those persons whose general qualities are shared in common with their brethren; however, these *plain persons*, by the looks of it, appear to be ordinary people of virtue who have conscientiously aimed to fulfill their human *telos*, and in so doing also succeed in achieving their full “*humanness*” through the process of living out a life in the form according to which the result of those commitments was the fulfillment their human *ergon*.

Those who make the continual effort to pursue the success of framing their lives in such a way as to make this happen for themselves also tend to live in such a way so as to encourage and facilitate this movement in their community as a whole, more broadly.

However, this account, irrespective of its persuasive prowess, will forever remain insufficient for our purposes, or anyone’s purposes for that matter if, of course, the entire point of the account was to illustrate for the reader a merely descriptive account (essentially serving the same function or value as a photograph of a particular moment) insofar as it neglects to provide for its readers any kind of discussion or treatment. As we have seen, this awareness of the necessity of moving from the descriptive to the normative is part of the life and experience of *plain persons*. This (above) mini-section serves as segue into what follows, which keeps the above in mind, while dealing with the question: “But, how or why is this the way it is, and how can, or how do we, should we, do this?”

As was previously mentioned at the close of Chapter III, if your author applies what becomes apparent in Dr. Carson's *Learning and Reference*, from her "*Meaning and the Learning Process*," concerning "*informal procedures*:" that *maxims of reflection and principles of revision*, to general observations of human actions with a view to moral value, that we will find through the structures of these *informal procedures (maxims of reflection and principles of revision)*, the emergence of a kind of relationship of the mind between Aristotle, Aquinas, Berry, and Carson. I will aim to accomplish this in the following chapter (Chapter VI), in part, by showing that her discussion in *Learning and Inference* points through deliberation towards command, while simultaneously revealing similarities to Aquinas' moral epistemology insofar as he reasons towards commandment correctly understood.

Be the aforementioned as it may, there is one important detail to note before moving forward. Dr. Carson's philosophical loyalties rest in the Dewey school, especially as it concerns "the role of education in forming moral character,"⁸³ and while this approach, is helpful for our purposes insofar as her epistemological approach to language learning reflects a similarity to the kind of epistemological approach to moral development espoused herein, it is of a divergent view with respect to "natural law;" and the significance of such a divergence is that while the Dewey School is a modern permutation of the classical view, and her epistemology, as mentioned above, with respect to language learning is similar in terms of human rationality and moral

⁸³ Elias, John. *Philosophy of Education: Classical and Contemporary*. Malabar: Krilger Publishing Company, 1995, 52.

development---we discover rather than construct truths---I espouse an ordered universe
our young should be instructed towards---it is a view that her position finds suspect.

CHAPTER VI
MORAL EPISTEMOLOGY

The Educative Program

According to David Kennedy, “Human dialogue is the inter-subjective location where individual and communal, self and other, thinking for oneself and thinking with others, are possible. It is a continuous process of mutual reconfiguration... [I]n the theory and practice of philosophy for children it is impossible to avoid the larger educational implications in this model.”⁸⁴ The implications of this are significant, not just with regard to the transformation of curriculum, but also in relation to the transformation of the adult-child community of which *school* consists, through which dialogue “becomes the primary discursive structure grounding pedagogy, curriculum, and other aspects of the human educational project.”⁸⁵

Kennedy posits that ‘collective dialogue,’ when encouraged amongst young children by even a moderately skilled facilitator, instills in them the capacity for critical, creative, and collaborative thinking.

The structure of language and of communal discourse leads us to classify and categorize, make generalizations, provide instances and illustrations, define terms, construct analogies, and formulate hypotheses. Finding our way with language at all involves working with criteria, consistency and contradiction, part-whole connections and ambiguity.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Kennedy, David. “Philosophical Dialogue with Children.”: Lewiston: the Edwin Mellen Press, 2010, 110.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 110.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 111.

He advocates posing open-ended questions to students in order to promote commonality, while at the same time allowing for individual understandings and modes of thinking. The aim of the resultant conversations is towards a ‘communal inquiry’ which is directed toward an ongoing search for teleological truth.

It is up to the facilitators to “coach the participants in the reflexive, metacognitive moves that afford glimpses of the arguments’ emerging structure, and to crystalize its implicit drive toward judgment;” and although the teacher is also, along with the students, a participant in the “play of the argument,” it is required that he or she maintain the “implicit logical structure of the discourse tradition in which the group operates.”⁸⁷ Individual and cultural narratives are formed against particular backgrounds, with particular (grammatical) rules, and with particular sets of resources (histories and notions of the telos).

Every group, being a collective of unique individuals with unique ways of thinking and approaching questions, unique strengths and weaknesses, has its own personality and character; and the facilitator must keep the unique characteristics of each individual group of students in mind as he or she directs the class toward this logical structure of discourse. At the same time that every group is unique, however, the law of averages also tends to predict a certain commonality from any one group to the next, each statistically likely to contain a scattering across the developmental and intellectual scales more or less similar to every other group, so that it is likely that any group which allows for the participation of all of its members is a possible context for *community of inquiry*.

⁸⁷*Ibid*, 129.

Of course, the feasibility of a *community of inquiry* is also greatly dependent upon the culture to which the microgroup belongs, as well as the degree of cultural diversity and/or friction represented within it.⁸⁸

On the other hand, he maintains that children are known to be quite adaptable in their abilities to shift their imaginations across individual, group, and cultural boundaries; and he emphasizes the importance of teachers' recognition of the significance of this particular group characteristic and the dynamic it is likely to bring into play, in order to reinforce and use it to facilitate "the emergence of larger structures of argument." This skill, he maintains, is an art, not a science; thus, the teacher must, in some degree rely on his or her 'intuition' or 'gut' in the direction of the class.⁸⁹

Moral Epistemology

In this particular section of Chapter II of this thesis, I will explore what appears to me as a quintessential human rational process, the development and the improvement of which, is necessary for acquiring moral knowledge and properly applying acquired knowledge to one's own life. These rational processes develop wonderfully through moral exercises somewhat identical in structure to those which Dr. Carson details in *Learning and Inference*.⁹⁰ I will explore this matter through at least one observation concerning the questions directed towards understanding the process by which children come to understand the meanings of certain utterances that they otherwise have not the

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 111-31.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 111-32.

⁹⁰ Carson, Jo Ann. "Learning and Inference." Meaning and the Learning Process. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995, 230-82.

means by which to interpret if it were not for the intelligibility derived through the powers of inference whereby one perceives both the apparent and the, to varying degrees, implied meanings, also found “embedded” in the experience. Just as Wendell Berry, a “*plain person*,” does, each and every one of us *plain persons* can come to understand what is good, why it is good, and how to bring this goodness to fruition.

With this understanding in mind, let us now move to elaborate on this. We can begin with Bergman’s question: “How does the natural law come to be recognized and intelligently practiced?” His response

It is through initiation into the ordered relationships of some particular practice or practices, through education into the skills and virtues which it or they require, and through an understanding of the relationship of those skills and virtues to the achievements of the good internal to that practice or those practices that we first find application in everyday life.⁹¹

While both this question and its response specifically concern natural law as something recognized and intelligently practiced by the agent in agency, I would like to now explain myself using a portion of a work that, as far as I know, doesn’t make explicit reference to natural law *per se* (though I do believe it is certainly implied), to open the discussion on agency and a particular rational process. This is a process, the development and improvement of which (in particular as it relates to this project) through moral exercises (as this is the focus at hand), and is necessary for acquiring moral knowledge and the proper application of such knowledge to children’s lives.

I am of the view that Dr. Carson’s discussion of meaning and the value its role carries into teachable moments articulates a structural rational process that is uniquely

⁹¹ Bergman, Roger, 9.

human. Dr. Carson's work *Meaning in the Learning Process* undertakes to explain the process by which children come to learn the meaning of, *or* meaning implied by, *or* meaning "embedded" in situations, *and* so too, in the language used in the same situation by another in the event that this "other" speaks a language that is not intelligible to the child.⁹² This, then, allows the understanding of situational contexts as they emerge within structures of the experience by which other conclusions relevant to the situational context are, or can be inferred.

To reaffirm the aforesaid, I will retell the brief story with only a slight difference. Dr. Carson articulates the process through which a child learns the meaning of an utterance by way of other cues, the meaning(s) of which is (are) embedded in the situation; and she informs her reader that this implies a certain process of, if not looking for, then simply seeing the prospects for implied meanings as they are embedded within the situational context and detectable, by the trained ear and eye, through the perception of implied meanings of a situation as it appears to the perceiver.

I happen to concur that "meaning" does serve the learning process -- it is the key feature for "meaning-seeking creatures" who seek to understand. Furthermore, for this meaning to emerge as something "embedded" within a situational context, it has to be intelligible; and for an action to be intelligible, there has to be a common stock of practices and narratives, an idea that is easily comprehensible when one reflects on notions of small-town etiquette, tradition, social bonds, etc.

All of the above brings us to this, that the process by which children infer meaning from utterances they do not, or do not yet, have the cognitive foundations to

⁹² Carson, Jo Ann, 230-82.

know, is the very same structure or process that the same child would employ to understand the meaning behind others' actions and whether or not such actions are indeed "right." So, arriving at understanding of the meaning of the utterances of others and the actions of others is the same process. And from this, it can be *inferred* that if this becomes the underpinning to the approach of educators as they educate our posterity with a view to the significance of a sustainable future, we will see the laying of a foundation for the proper structure of an educational structure intended to develop moral thinking skills in children through a process focused on the implementation of lessons instructive in the sustainable practices and the internal goods constitutive to such practices. Consequent to this, we might bear witness to the growth of the structures of their moral rational processes, or moral experiences, so that their primary occupation is with development through the practices that constitute the goods internal to the practice.

This leads to development of the character while, at the same time, and from this vantage (sustainability as a virtue), it refines the child's talents and modes of practice towards the achievement of the great, final good, that of a sustainable future brought into existence by a subsistence economy pursuant of our flourishing through a tradition of the virtues, with an expanded scope to include all things organic in proportion to the requirements that our own standards demand, which is not to flourish until we no longer can, but rather to flourish indefinitely; I'm arguing for the sustainability of the kind of life (and lives) as they embody the kinds of human activity that, as a whole, is generally understood as that which is natural and necessary. I am arguing for a kind of ecological and biological *stasis*, unlike the one in which we presently inhabit.

This approach, it is my contention, is best instantiated by the life and words of Wendell Berry. In addition to the above, it satisfies the requirements which, as MacIntyre suggests, are now disassembled and therefore comprehensively incoherent in our own time. And so it is with this view in mind that Wendell Berry becomes so encouraging, as it does appear to me that he embodies a third possible route to the same hopeful future as deemed necessary by MacIntyre in *After Virtue*, and to do so without reconciling ourselves to that narrowing of our experiential scope to that which is possible from only within the rituals held inside the walls of the Benedictine monastery model with which he leaves his readers. Hence, it is the unique quality of this that urges my claim that Berry's way is the instantiation of the properly ordered soul, reaffirming itself through sustainability as a way of life.

Emergent Community of Philosophical Inquiry in Early Childhood Discourse

According to Kennedy, "the structure of language and of communal discourse leads us to classify and categorize, make generalizations, provide instances and illustrations, define terms, construct analogies, and formulate hypothesis."⁹³ In order for us to benefit from language use at all, we must be able to synthesize meaning from competing variables within the framework of one's immediate experience; and this includes navigating through inconsistencies and differences in understanding between human beings as they filter language through their own subjective biases. It is these very types of practices that contribute to the development of interpersonal relations between children when they require improvement as it pertains to the social virtues within a

⁹³ *Ibid*, 111.

framework directed toward a shared set of goals, the attainment of which is considered praiseworthy. At the same time, such activity plays an unquestionable role in fostering the further development of observational and intellectual processes which increasingly enhance the child's capacities.

These capacities are enhanced further through the use of open-ended questions. This technique is instrumental to the encouragement of active and inclusive group discussions amongst the children, aiming toward the instigation of group conversation notable for a lively, open type of discourse, "common to all, adequate to each individual," and directed at teleological truth. There should be no doubt that the uncovering of teleological truths should be the aim of the group conversation, even if it is acknowledged that the search for such truth will be "infinite." In fact, this truth-seeking conversation may not be seen as specifically goal-oriented at all; rather it might be perceived as cyclic, that is, perpetuating its own inquiry -- a perpetual process of inquiry whereby no conclusive end or final cause is ever finally discerned. Within such a tradition, it is the journey, not the end, through which the most valuable goods internal to the process make themselves known.⁹⁴

As has been noted in an earlier portion of this paper, MacIntyre is adamant that the development of genuine virtues cannot occur outside of a society which exhibits mores and practices directed toward "genuine human goods within living traditions of moral inquiry into the human good."⁹⁵ A society as virtuous as such should have in place some method of directing the children as they undergo this character-forming work for

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 111-32.

⁹⁵ Bergman, Roger 17.

which the intended outcome is the transformation of their until-now immature and unexamined impulses, motivations, and desires so that they might complement and facilitate the recognition and attainment of those goods and virtues held in esteem by the community. It is, therefore, incumbent upon teachers to focus the eyes and minds of their students in the direction of those same communally valued goods and virtues--those which, in the estimation of the community, are critical and dear. Such a consensus can only arise from a common understanding:

[A] conception of the human *telos* as being the achievement of a type of life of which the virtues are necessary constitutive parts. It is precisely this *telos* [about which] a shared public program of moral education and a heterogeneous society cannot agree...perhaps even argue constructively about...[M]oral education as a social practice conducive to the development of virtue can only be genuine within local communities.⁹⁶

It might appear that it would, in our “post-Enlightenment” period, be nearly impossible for a diverse society such as the one within which we live to any longer arrive at some kind of consensus to transform, much less transcend the *status quo* in virtue of some new kind of common understanding of good motives, good desires, good actions, or some guidelines as to the crucial virtues.

However, Bergman posits that it is specifically through “authentic encounter with those outside our immediate communities of discourse” that the perspectives and diversity of understanding requires of us to comprehend the “natural law language of universal human rights” might find illumination.⁹⁷ And before moving on, it would be worthwhile for the reader to note that this approach aims to reflect a sensitivity to the fact

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 18.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 20.

that we are always and forever pointed in some direction or other, especially as new learners (at any life-stage, but certainly as children), and as such, this is not a call for narrow indoctrination, but rather for intentional cultivation of those characteristics of persons most consistent with flourishing.

Whether we agree with this argument or not, it is MacIntyre's contention that each successive generation is molded according to the "the ongoing, self-critical moral life of the community as a whole, rooted in a living tradition," through whatever means a given community employs to educate its young, and in the endless permutations of the teacher-student relationship represented within any given community. In whatever guise such relationships present themselves, however, one crucial component is overwhelmingly absent in our own education system--the "development of classrooms as caring communities in which moral concerns and behaviors are modeled by the teacher, practiced by the students, and examined by teacher and student in dialogue...that encourages a community of learners."⁹⁸

An essential feature of such an arrangement (and one that is conspicuously absent from our own system) is that of an undisrupted, continuous relationship between the teacher and the students. Specifically this means an ongoing, from-one-year-to-the-next class structure in which the same group of children would remain entrusted to the care of one teacher over the course of their entire educational process, or at the very least a significant stretch of their critical years of moral and intellectual development. This would allow that a teacher who has grown to know and love the child can, with an

⁹⁸ Bergman, Roger, 21.

intimate concern and familiarity, tend the seeds of practical knowledge and virtue as they sprout, take hold with stable roots, and flower into understanding and steadfastness.

This ongoing relationship is critical for the necessary bond of trust and comfortable familiarity which provides the students with an optimal arrangement within which to flourish. These nurturing qualities of mutual understanding, trust, and affection are exactly those qualities which will allow children to learn and grow in knowledge, skill, and virtue, and which will imbue them with the confidence to live their lives in accord with virtue in those actions and activities which they will one day possess the necessary competence to ably judge the right courses of action in conformity with the attainment of their own good ends.

From the above we have come to understand not only the human *ergon* as that final human good that we, as a species, seem to have lost sight of, but also that if this vision was found again, it would be that which provided intelligibility to each action. We have also, through the course of this endeavor, articulated a strong basis for both MacIntyrean claims, first, that each plain person is the instantiation of a universal particular and, second, that Wendell Berry is one of the best exemplars of one who instantiates his vision of the *good life*. This bodes well for the further argument embedded within this manuscript that *sustainability is a virtue*. From such a juncture (at the close of Chapter VI), the only stone left unturned, or the only question remaining unanswered is “how exactly does one get here?” It is this question that lends the conversation to the further constructive considerations concerning the art of moral education as it depends on one’s *Moral Epistemology*, and illustrates the *how* concerning our overall vision for our future, pursuant of solving the overarching problems of

modernity, while illustrating Wendell Berry as the instantiation of Alasdair MacIntyre's *good life*, and sustainability as a virtue.

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