God and Morality: Reconceiving MacIntyre's Position

Tanrı ve Ahlak: MacIntyre'ın Bakış Açısını Yeniden Düşünme

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Abstract: "How should I live?" is the question to which MacIntyre gives the central place in his moral inquiry. MacIntyre, throughout his famous book After Virtue (AV), criticizes modern moral philosophy for failing to provide a rational and justified answer to this question. His moral project is predominantly shaped by the quest for this answer. What he offered had great impact simply because he applied to religion or the idea of God to explain morality at a time when religion lost its charm among philosophers. However, MacIntyre never discusses this connection between religion and morality in a complete and detailed way. Therefore, any examination of his reference to religion for a theory of morality needs to synthesize his different statements from very different texts. In doing this, the article aims to provide a complete picture of his gradually-evolved understanding of the role of God in moral philosophy both at a theoretical and practical level with a critical outlook.

Keywords: MacIntyre, God, Morality, religion, theism, atheism, moral realism, emotivism.

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Giriş

"How should I live?" is the question which MacIntyre gives the central place in his moral inquiry. MacIntyre, throughout his famous book *After Virtue* (*AV*), criticizes modern moral philosophy for failing to provide a rational and justified answer to this question. The quest for this answer predominantly shapes his moral project. His resolution aroused great resonance simply because he applied to religion or the idea of God in order to explain morality at a time when religion lost its charm among philosophers. However, MacIntyre never discusses the connection between religion and morality in a complete and detailed way. Therefore, any examination of his reference to religion for a theory of morality needs to synthesize his different statements from very different texts. In doing this, the article aims to provide a complete picture of his gradually evolved understanding of the role of God in moral philosophy with a critical outlook both at a theoretical and practical level.

In order to trace the evolution of his idea that religion has a central place in morality, two different periods will be put forward. The first period consists of his early years of philosophy and *AV* period. The second is his Thomistic-Aristotelian period. In the first period, the subject of religion is not a critical issue in MacIntyre's moral philosophy. It can only find a place as one of the contexts of morality. This approach, which avoids direct reference to religion, causes a lacuna in MacIntyre's moral philosophy while defending a rational and justified morality against modernism. This lacuna is about finding a foundation for morality. However, in the second period, religion appears as the most critical context for his moral philosophy and fills this lacuna. At this point, the idea of metaphysical realism completes the missing part of his moral philosophy. From then on, MacIntyre becomes an advocate to Thomistic metaphysical realism as a necessary foundation of morality.

This theoretical intervention inevitably resulted in some anomalies in practical life. In other words, his theoretical development on the subject of religion exposes a difficult puzzle in practice. Since he accepts that the atheist may well be moral, this anomaly begs for an explanation. For him, while, at the practical level, we can be moral and, at the same time, we can believe that there is no God, we, in the understanding/theoretical

level, cannot make final statements about morality without any reference to God. By this solution, MacIntyre accepts the possibility of being a moral atheist but leaves the atheist desperate to explain his moral behavior. Despite the challenging character of this view, MacIntyre does not seem willing to continue this discussion, which is, in fact, a unique contribution to the contemporary religion and morality debates.

The article will begin with the first period of MacIntyre's moral philosophy concerning religion. This first period opens from two different perspectives: 1. Morality in relation to religion. 2. Morality with exception to religion.

1. First Period: Morality in a lacuna

1.1. Morality in Relation to Religion

From the beginning of his intellectual journey, MacIntyre is a very robust critique of secularism. This critique includes, with the same strength, the displacement of religion from the context of secular morality. Before AV, MacIntyre refers to religion mainly in the context of this critique. Rather than discussing religion and morality as an independent subject, he criticizes the exclusion of religion through secularism and its results in the moral life.

Furthermore, when we keep in mind that MacIntyre did not develop a moral philosophy before his AV, that attitude is understandable. Below there are some examples. He articulates:

> Christianity consists of a number of assertions about what God is and what he has done and a number of injunctions about how we ought to live. In the New Testament, the latter are made to depend on the former... (1961, p. 102).

Then he speaks from the perspective of Christianity and argues:

> Our morality, our whole lives are to depend on our religion. But the dominant philosophical view since the eighteenth century has been that morality is totally independent of religion; that how we ought to live cannot be derived from any statements or beliefs about God, even from statements as to what God has commanded or desires. If this were so, then religion would indeed be an abstract and theoretical matter; if religion cannot yield conclu-

sions about how we ought to live it can have at best a purely speculative interest (ibid.).

Later on, in *Secularization and Moral Change,* he examines the results of the secularization of Christianity on moral subjects. Here he criticizes secularism for making religion invisible in the field of morality because secularism destroyed how people can share some common standards, including religious rituals that people would follow (1967, p. 50-57). MacIntyre says here explicitly:

> A society could have a common moral authority without that authority taking a religious form or having any religious backing. But if religious forms are to have a hold upon life and upon practice, then there must be room for some appeal to a religious authority in moral matters (ibid., p.53).

Right before *AV*, in the article "Seven Traits of the Future," he refers to the virtue of hope and says: "Hope challenges any merely secular conception of reason" (1979a, p.7). What then, is the non-secular content of the virtue of hope? MacIntyre discusses this virtue without any reference to Christianity, however, gives it a religious content. For him, the virtue of hope challenges the problem of evil since, through it, people have the confidence that good will prevail over evil. He gives an example that it was the virtue of hope by means of which the Jews chant God on their way to the gas chambers. At that moment, there was a belief that the death of human beings would not be purposeless, and their lives would not get wasted (ibid.).

Further on, MacIntyre refers to the conviction that Enlightenment will have built itself on reason and scientific knowledge of the future, but it has not realized. For him, the real construction of the future will be maintained with the virtue of hope, not with reason and science. Moreover, the virtue of hope is related to God, since, due to this virtue, we develop that confidence about good overcome evil in the future. Therefore it is not the secular mind, but only God can assure this confidence (ibid.). After *AV*, MacIntyre will reconsider the virtue of hope and understand it as a theological virtue as Aquinas understood it. Nevertheless, here the reference to this virtue seems to be irrelevant to any theology and does not indicate any morality-religion relation in detail.

During *AV* period, MacIntyre develops a systematic moral philosophy. Surprisingly, the book does not say almost anything about the relation between morality and religion differently from his other texts. In the second edition of the same book, he also points this out as an inadequacy (2013, p.322-323). Here he only mentions the results of the secularization of Protestantism on the justification of moral beliefs as in the previous texts (ibid., p. 45). He believes that the Enlightenment has suffered a final defeat in the rational justification of morality, and therefore morality was deprived of any basis. In the same text, he further argues that in a world of secular rationality, religion could no longer provide any rational justification (ibid., p.58). After *AV*, in the "The Ends of Life and of Philosophical Writing," he indicates the question of "what are the ends of life?" Religion has provided an answer to this question in the history of humankind. Again, for MacIntyre, because of secularism, religion could not play any role in answering it (2006a, p. 126).

So far, it is proper to say that MacIntyre's reference to religion in morality before *AV* and partly after *AV* period is not at all a particular reference. The main reason for this is that MacIntyre did not include any metaphysical explanation in morality until *Whose Justice Which Rationality (WJWR)*. In *AV*, for example, he explicitly rejects Aristotle's understanding of metaphysics in morality, including metaphysical *telos,* but does not replace it with any new metaphysics. Consequently, MacIntyre's moral philosophy has deprived of a metaphysical basis until his transition to Thomistic thought. Therefore the crucial questions such as "what kind of role does religion play in morality?" or "what is the relationship between being moral and being religious?" or "what is the foundation of morality?" are not questions which MacIntyre directly could ask in this period.

In the same period, MacIntyre also seems to advocate moral realism, but again without any metaphysics. He ignores the need for a metaphysical basis in moral philosophy and, at the same time, rejects the relationship between moral commandments and God on behalf of moral realism. However, it should be noted here that MacIntyre will continue to maintain the latter consistently while will correct the first with the Thomistic thought. I will postpone the discussion of how to defend moral realism without a metaphysical basis to his Thomistic period, and express here

only what he understands from a moral realism before his Thomism.

1.2. Morality with Exception to Religion

Although MacIntyre will reinterpret later the idea of moral realism from a theological perspective of Thomism, his views here will remain about the same. MacIntyre identifies moral realism in such a simple way. For him, "why are you doing this or that?" is the question that cannot be answered like "because God enjoins this." The simplicity of the discussion is ancient. In Plato's *Euthyphro*, we can find the origin of it. MacIntyre also quotes the story in which "Socrates asks whether it is the case that the gods enjoin certain things because they are pious or is it the case that such things are pious because the gods enjoin them" (1961, p. 104). MacIntyre replies to Socrates's question by rejecting religion as a foundation of morality in order to not fall into an "intellectual unintelligibility," and therefore, he supports here the autonomy of moral vocabulary and commandments (ibid., p. 103).

MacIntyre gives an example of the independent character of morality in the concept of justice, and he defends the knowledge of justice as independent of the knowledge of God and God's commands. Here it is essential to see that MacIntyre's objection is not a theological but philosophical because, for him, we have to consider the standards of justice as independent of God in order to separate the image of a true God from a false god. Our idea of what looks like a just God would be already based on the fact that we had priorly the idea of justice independently from God. Further on, in "The Religious Significance of Atheism," he questions whether belief in God provides an essential justification of morality? The answer is a clear no! What we should have in mind here that MacIntyre does not use the term of justification in moral life as the promise of rewards or the threats of punishments in the future life, even if they motivate moral behavior. What MacIntyre questions here is whether there is any logical connection between God and morality for justificatory reasons. He defends the independence of the moral vocabulary from theistic beliefs, and so moral behavior can be understood independently from theism (1969, p. 32). We can infer that theism for MacIntyre does not play any role in justifying moral rules.

According to him, this standpoint makes possible that atheists and

theists can deal with the question of the right rules and goods for all human. The moral vocabulary, if it wants to be not just a speculative vocabulary, must have shared and independent content. So the concepts such as "good," "virtue," and the like must be defined without theistic beliefs. MacIntyre says here: "We ought to do what God commands if we are theists because it is right in some independent sense of "right" rather than hold that what God commands is right just because God commands it" (ibid., p.33). That means theism too if it is to be coherent, must rely for its statement upon an independently understood moral vocabulary. More strongly, MacIntyre says: "Theistic practice depends upon the existence of independent moral practices" (ibid., p. 35).

This view will also be in MacIntyre's Thomistic period, the only basis for the continuation of the thesis that atheistic morality can be possible; however, he will make some reservations on it. I will turn to this in the second part of the article. Before that, these two viewpoints of MacIntyre need to be brought together. In the first, where MacIntyre establishes a morality-religion relationship, religion supplies a contextual relevance to the moral issues which secularism explicitly denies. Here religion is understood as one of the moral authority that gives particular and shared moral standards to the society. Of course, from the perspective of a believer, the relationship between religion and morality is straightforward. MacIntyre does not refuse it. Believers find the moral codes from divine statements in the Bible, Koran, or Torah. This point is also, according to MacIntyre, where religious morality gains the legitimate normative character in the context of a particular religion in contrast to modern secular morality, considering secular morality has no rational legitimation ground in this perspective.

However, as said above, MacIntyre did not see the discussion as the discussion between metaphysics and morality. Therefore, MacIntyre's view about the relationship between morality and religion is rather loose since, without metaphysical connections between them, religion cannot go beyond being as one of the speculative subjects of morality. Again, the same metaphysical lacuna puts MacIntyre's notion of moral realism in distress, because the idea of moral realism also needs to be comprehended with metaphysics. Also, MacIntyre will realize that moral realism in

this incomplete state will not prevail over the moral perspectives which he designates it in *AV* as emotivism.

Before moving on to how MacIntyre overcomes his lack of a metaphysical basis with Thomism, the following question appears to be important for the discussion of the second period of MacIntyre. His acceptance of the relationship between religion and morality rejected by secularism, and at the same time, his rejection of religion as a source of moral rules requires us inevitably to ask: "What then exactly should be the relationship between religion and morality?" In other terms, "How much importance should we give to religion in the moral sphere?" More radically, "To be honest, just, right, merciful should we believe in God?" Through Aquinas MacIntyre's answers to these questions involving a radical transformation. And the following part will be about this.

2. Second Period: Filling the Lacuna

It is pointed out the need for a metaphysical basis for MacIntyre's morality. He has also indicated this need in the "Postscript" (2000a) on the second edition of *AV*. On the one hand, he tries to explain morality through social foundations in *AV*, and on the other hand, defends a moral realism. Defending two theses at the same time compels us to ask "how a social-based morality can also give a base to the idea of moral realism?" and "how can we understand the moral vocabulary as "good" or "bad" without falling into relativism?" MacIntyre should leave one of these theses: moral realism or explaining morality only in social terms. MacIntyre reformulated the latter to avoid destroying his moral project against relativism in *AV*. The Thomistic metaphysics fills the lacuna in his moral realism.

About four years after publishing *AV*, MacIntyre's approach to Aquinas has begun first to appear. In 1988, for the first time, he became a follower of Thomas Aquinas. In this period, he adopts a particular theistic moral structure based on Thomistic terminology. Thereby MacIntyre appears to integrate the subject of religion independently from the context of secularism critique. For example, in his *God, Philosophy and Universities*, he explicitly signifies a dimensional change when he says:

There is a crucial relationship between metaphysics and ethics. For it is only

insofar as we understand the universe, including ourselves, as dependent on God for our existence that we are also able to understand ourselves as directed toward God... (2009a, p. 178).

In this metaphysical dimension, I want to limit the metaphysical content to the idea of natural law and its metaphysical commitments. In this way, I will try to show how he completes the foundation gap in his moral realism in the first period. The previously mentioned unanswered questions in MacIntyre's first period such as "how much weight should we give to religion in the moral sphere?", to be honest, just, right, merciful, etc. should we believe in God?" have been answered through these concepts. Before answering these crucial questions, we need to understand the Thomistic moral realism and natural law first.

2.1. The Moral Realism and Natural Law

The metaphysical dimension of MacIntyre's moral philosophy is directly related to moral realism. MacIntyre's moral realism after AV is Thomistic realism; it can also be called metaphysical realism. The key thesis of it contains that there is the truth (and false) independent human conception. Thus, the theory of truth is the central concept of moral realism. Although MacIntyre in AV criticizes the different conceptions of the meaning of truth in modern moral theories very strongly, he does not say anything about how we identify the truth as the reality in itself. The quest for truth becomes a central engagement for MacIntyre after his becoming a Thomist. Only after that, he could describe the truth based on Aquinas and moral realism as following:

> Objects ... exist prior to and independently of our apprehension. Were it not so, we would not... be able to perceive and understand them.... It is not just that... we make objects intelligible by categorizing them and conceptualizing them. It is rather that objects are intelligible per se and that we are able to categorize and conceptualize them truly because they properties that make them apt for categorization in this way rather than that (2006c, p.190).

The source of moral realism is the law of nature. Although there are some secular interpretations of natural law, Thomistic natural law merges with two theses: teleology and theology. According to this, natural law puts specific goals and objectives into the existence in nature. Thus one

acts following her purpose in a harmonious universe. Only in this way can she do what right is according to her nature. This teleological under-standing of the universe is the manifestation of divine expression. Owing to the natural law, when we say that something is true or just, we refer to a triple relationship between our mind, the object itself, and the divine mind. Aquinas says, "… we judge how things truly are when we think of them as they are thought of by God" (2006b, p. 210).

So, the divine standpoint is indispensable for achieving and under-standing the truth of something. Therefore, ignoring the divine mind in the realist sense of truth advocated by moral realism reduces the concept of truth to a mere personal claim. Furthermore, such an understanding of truth will abolish the idea of natural law automatically because the natural law commands us to think that there is the truth beyond our intellect. The guarantor of the truth is God. What we can do is only to discover it (1988, p. 169).

The precepts of natural law are our starting points for any practical rationality. For Aquinas, the function of natural law is to give the funda-mental principles according to which practical reason acts, with this, we can educate our passions and thus perform the virtuous acts. The primary precept of the natural law is, as Aquinas said, "good is to be done and pursued and evil is to be avoided" (2006d, p. 63-64). They are, without exception which means we recognize them "as indispensable in every society" (2006e, p. 64, 49; 2006d, p. 63, 65). As MacIntyre quotes from Aquinas:

> The knowledge that enables us to [say what the natural law is] is possessed by any person capable of adequate reasoning and, so far as the common principles of the natural law are concerned, by every rational being (2006e, p. 48).

Moreover, we do not achieve them after a careful examination; we get them without difficulty (2006d, p. 78), as MacIntyre indicates that "we know them, at least primarily, not as conclusions but as presupposi-tions of our activities, just insofar as those activities are or aspire to ra-tionality" (2006e, p. 48). MacIntyre also underlines that "willing conformity to those precepts is a precondition of rational and serious inquiry; it turns out that we cannot but presuppose allegiance to them in our activi-

ties" (2006e, p. 48). In his last book in 2016, he also makes room for the natural law. He says: "Without unconditional obedience to [certain] precepts there cannot be shared rational deliberation, and without shared rational deliberation, there cannot be rational agents" (2016, p. 56-57).

Furthermore, believing in natural law saves us from involving any emotivist moral perspectives since MacIntyre speaks of two grounds provided by natural law: "shared and public standards", which means a secured standard for a "widespread rational assent of plain persons" (2000b, p. 103-104). Therefore, the principles of natural law cannot be derived from anything. They have an essential character on their own and do not belong to any particular context and open to all rational human beings (1979b, p.16-18). That is to say, the rationality which natural law provides us is not the rationality of consistency.

At this point, it is crucial to re-underline the non-inferential character of the precepts of natural law. Consequently, there is no need to think about the precepts of natural law in a theological framework. There is no theoretical argument that can support the precepts of natural law as theology (2006d, p. 80). Therefore, MacIntyre, in his article (2009b) objects to J. Porter's argument positing that the natural law "inevitably involves some degree of theological specification." He says, "if the requirements of practical reason are rightly understood, then practical rationality provides everything which is needed for the moral life, independently of any theological ethics" (ibid., p. 315). Therefore MacIntyre does not see religion or theology in a first-degree relationship with morality because natural law precedes any human and divine law (ibid., p. 324-325). Natural law has a character that is understandable to the human mind independent of the truths of the revelation, and divine law presupposes knowledge of the principles of natural law prior to itself. Here, he supports this belief, as he has understood from Aquinas (ibid., p. 341). This standpoint of MacIntyre will also see the possibility of atheist morality. I will turn to it in the next title.

In this case, how the natural law's relationship with God will be understood? The precepts of natural law are on Aquinas's view, "the expression of divine law as apprehended by human reason and God in uttering those precepts to human beings is at one sovereign legislator and teacher"

(1988, p. 180-181). We need here to differentiate the content of natural law and the source of the acceptance of natural law. In this level, MacIntyre understands the source of the preliminary acknowledgment that rational everyone commonly accepts the principles of natural law is theological. So this source of acceptance itself has already a revelatory content. He says: "I take it to be a revealed truth that we can by the exercise of the powers of natural reason recognize the authority of the precepts of the natural law" (2009b, p. 343-344). So the existence of a God becomes an ontological argument for the natural law itself. MacIntyre states, for example, that modern human rights cannot be understood without a theological perspective. However, MacIntyre does not see the theological explanation of rights as an alternative to the explanation of natural law (ibid., p. 346). Here he only intends to say that the concept of such a human right, which all human beings can agree on it exists because of our general human nature, which is created by God.

So far, it was exposed to the role of God in terms of the existence of natural law itself. We can call this the first dimension of the role of God in natural law. There is the second dimension of the role of God regarding the moral agent who is, by nature, bound to obey the natural law. MacIntyre explains this as follows:

> The central human experience of the natural law... is our inability to live by it... the only remedy for disobedience to law... had to have ...the super natural virtues. For just as and because justice is continually the victim of the vice and sin of pride, so justice cannot flourish, cannot...even exist as a natural virtue, unless and insofar as it is informed by the supernatural virtue of caritas. Charity is the form of all virtues; without charity the virtues would lack the specific kind of directedness, which they require. And charity is not to be acquired by moral education; it is a gift of grace (1988, p. 205).

Aquinas adds to the cardinal virtues of Aristotle three theological virtues: faith, hope and charity. MacIntyre interprets the role of these virtues through Aquinas and says:

> It is in the end up to us whether or not we become prudent, temperate, courageous, and just. It is not at all up to us whether or not we receive the gifts of faith, hope and charity, virtues that we owe entirely to divine grace, grace offered us by God, virtues that are in-

fused in us rather than acquired through habituation. Yet charity is, says Aquinas, the form of all virtues. Wherever there is genuine virtue, it is informed by charity and grace is at work (2009a, p. 92).

MacIntyre underlines that the theological virtues are fundamentally crucial for two reasons. First, with the practice of theological virtues, divine grace enters into the world and changes it. Human being apt to disobedience to the natural law because of either the corruption of reason through "some passion," or "bad habit" or just "undisciplined natural tendency" (1988, p. 181). Divine grace is the only remedy of this corrupted human nature. So the theological virtues need to be supplemented to the natural virtues. Secondly, without theological virtues, one cannot be fully competent in the practice of natural virtues. As MacIntyre understands, for Aquinas,

> The enacted narrative of that progress will only become fully intelligible when it is understood not only in terms of metaphysics but in an adequate theological light when that is, the particularities of that narrative are understood to embody what is said about sin and about grace in the Ia-IIae of the Summa as well as what is said about law and the virtues (1992, p. 19).

Thereby the moral journey of an ordinary person is a divine journey towards God intended to reach salvation. In this way, this journey is not limited to a moral space.

Here, MacIntyre opposes reading the idea of Thomistic natural law in a non-religious context. He resists them "who hold that it is possible to construct a genuinely Thomistic account of natural law and our knowledge of it 'without needing to advert to the question of God's existence or nature or will'." Further on, he adds following:

> On Aquinas's view religion is a moral virtue, being that part of the cardinal virtue of justice concerned with what we owe to God in the way of honor, reverence, and worship. Since perfected obedience to the natural law requires the virtue of justice in full measure…, it is difficult to understand how someone who did not believe that God is and that his attributes make him worthy of honour, reverence, and worship could be perfectly obedient to the natural law (1988, p.188).

Why so? MacIntyre argues, through Aquinas, the human intellect

progresses towards a perfected understanding by nature. It is a teleological understanding of the human being by natural law. Nevertheless, human nature is not able to live by the precepts of natural law perfectly; but, Thomistic realism is devoted to a perfected understanding (2006c, p. 190-191). It means "to understand human beings as having their place within an intelligible order of things is to understand them as possessing, like members of other species, a determinate and given nature" (ibid., p. 194). As human being, we can misconceive what the objects are because of our human inclinations and weak natures, therefore in Aquinas's view, the human intellect always in the journey towards a perfected understanding. However, human beings cannot achieve a perfect understanding of things by herself, so incomplete understanding will always remain the same until "it can be explained only by reference to God as first and final cause" (ibid., p. 191). Not only in search of the aim of life but also in search of the ultimate end of human beings needs to have reference to God (1988, p. 178). This ultimate end of human life is the happiness. MacIntyre explain it through Aquinas:

> Every human being... has by nature a desire for that happiness which is achieved only in union to God, integral to which is a recognition of God as the truth and all truths as from God, so that the progress through truths to the truth is itself one part of the ascent of mind and heart to God" (2006b, p. 212).

And this for Aquinas is "the contemplation of God in the beatific vision, in which contemplation all of human nature finds its completion" (1988, p. 192). However, human beings always fail to involve this happiness because of their imperfect nature.

Here is useful to summon on Newman's idea to understand MacIntyre's standpoint with Aquinas on this issue. MacIntyre seems to endorse Newman's idea that an adequate understanding of the things must end in theology. Newman says, as MacIntyre quotes: "All adequate understanding is, in the end, a theological understanding" (2009a, p. 142).

MacIntyre's quotes also from Newman, which is very enlightening about the role of God in morality:

> Admit a God, and you introduce among the subjects of your knowledge, a

fact encompassing, closing in upon, absorbing every other fact conceivable. How can we investigate any part of any order of Knowledge, and stop short of that which enters into every order! All true principles run over with it, all phenomena converge to it; it is truly the First and the Last (ibid., 146-147).

Moreover, in the very last sentences of his last book, MacIntyre underlines that in an investigation into the ultimate good and the best life, the function of politics and morals must end, and then natural theology begins at this point (2016, p. 315). Rejecting God leaves us unhelpful to achieve the knowledge of different things and to understand the universe in a completed way. Only through the knowledge of God, we can have the opportunity to unite different facts and understand them as undivided (2009a, p. 147). This complete understanding of things is significant for understanding and justifying our moral actions. So this is MacIntyre's framework of Aquinas's moral realism based on natural law and its relationship with God.

3. Crucial Questions are Answered: A Challenging Move from MacIntyre

As a result of MacIntyre's strong connections between religion and morality in his Thomistic period, the following practical questions arise very naturally: Do we have to be religious to be moral?" If yes, what is then the situation of people who are both atheists and morals? Surprisingly, contrary to the intense relationship that he establishes between morality and religion in theory, its practical results in the relationship between being moral and being religious are very scarce. There are only two places MacIntyre touches on this issue very directly. First is from a German-language interview in 1996, and the second is from his last book in 2016.

Firstly, in this interview, MacIntyre was asked two different crucial questions. The first question was, "whether the relationship between morality and religion is a compulsory one?" And following this, "can virtue ethics be justified and practiced without believing in God?" MacIntyre replies to this question through Aquinas. And he says:

My answer to this question is both yes and no. I support the view of Aquinas here. For Aquinas, one can have virtues such as practical wisdom, justice, courage without any appeal to theology. But also for him, without the virtue of supernatural love, which is the form of all virtues and contains the grace

of God, these virtues cannot sincerely be practiced. But practicing these virtues and practicing the virtue of love, the person does not necessarily have to realize the grace of God exists in her life. Hence, the virtues can just wholly be understood theologically, but the practicing of natural virtues can, of course, be reconciled with atheism (1996, p. 677-678).

Why is this so? MacIntyre explains it in a different place:

It is because a purely philosophical account of the virtues, an Aristotelian account of the virtues, although it may recognize a variety of types of error into which we may fall, is unable to take full account of all those obstacles from within ourselves that have to be overcome in the course of becoming virtuous. It is only from the standpoint of revealed truth that the full extent of the complexities and ingenuities of sinful human nature become clear ...It is only from the standpoint of faith that we are able to delineate the relationship of faith and reason because it is only from the standpoint of faith that we are able to diagnose the ways in which secular reason misconceives its own powers and underestimates its own vulnerabilities (2009b, p. 345-346).

In the same fashion, he says:

[Philosophy] can be carried out only by rational enquiry, independently of faith and revealed truths, enabling enquirers to understand how the specialized disciplines contribute to, but cannot themselves supply an understanding of the overall order of things... And there is a second set of tasks that can be carried out only by enquiry into the bearing of revealed truths, truths to be acknowledged only by faith, on the work of the university. These are the tasks of theology, rightly understood (2001, p. 4-5).

As we have seen, MacIntyre demonstrates the necessity of religion in morality with anthropology. Only such theological anthropology can reveal to us the relationship between the power of reason and the limits of reason. Approaching to the mind from the theological-anthropological perspective gives us the true self-knowledge, which we need for sound practical rationality. This self-knowledge for MacIntyre enables us to grasp the relationship between the knowledge of ourselves and our knowledge of God (2009b, p. 350). For instance, as MacIntyre indicates that Aristotle said nothing about this, and also the philosophy of Enlight-

enment denies any limitation of human reason and its weaknesses. But for Thomistic MacIntyre, without the divine light that will give us that awareness about a human being, the human reason is not able to understand everything adequately. MacIntyre calls this "the project of understanding" (2001, p. 3-4). He exemplifies this in the case of happiness:

> [The question of] where happiness lies… is not merely, although it is partly, a question of the difference which it might make to believe in survival after death. It is much more a question of the kind of shape and coherence which is given to moral life when it is placed in religious context… The only quite unfailing happiness is to be found in participating in… consummation in becoming the sort of person who is able to enter into a final union with God (1961, p. 107).

Thus, MacIntyre conducts the debate of the virtues in terms of being moral in two levels: Philosophical understanding level and theological understanding level of the virtues. The philosophical understanding level conveys us until a particular point where the human mind alone cannot adequately understand the nature of things. Here we have to turn to theology, which will give us the full account of the nature of virtues. Here again, the same question is asked: Should we be religious for being moral?

MacIntyre makes a statement in his last book and answers following question very quickly. He asks: "Does one have to be a theist to understand one's life in these [above] terms?" and replies: "Of course not" (2016, p. 231). How can we understand this? How can someone be a moral person without knowing the weaknesses of his/her reason and own inability to understand the order of all things in the universe? The one possible answer stands out for this. The person cannot understand the limitation of own reason and the adequate explanation of the things without the light of theology. Nevertheless, does one need to have a complete understanding of things to be moral? Certainly, not! In the practical level of the virtues, we do not need any kind of theology, since MacIntyre's moral realism depends on that good and evil are independent of our knowledge of God. And this is also very verifiable in our age. We can find many people who are very moral and very unbelievers.

Further on, in the same book, it is interesting to read that he recounts the life of four individuals as a moral role model. There, Mac-

Intyre does not also express anything about their religious attitudes, as to whether they were pious persons or not. Also long before his last book, in "Seven Traits for the Future," he does not even mention theology or religion in seven characteristics that would build a desirable moral society in the future (1979a, p. 5-7). So we can conclude that staying just a philosophical understanding level of the virtues, even if it is inadequate, can a person live morally.

Now here is the second question of the same interview: "Can the highest good, and the good which gives the purpose to the virtuous life, be determined without reference to God?" It is a very simple question which every reader of MacIntyre at this point would want to pose him. In answer to this, he makes a challenging move and says:

> My answer to this question is again yes and no for the same reason. That Aristotle understands human action as directed towards the highest goodness requires a firm understanding of rightness and wrongness. This is in deep disagreement with all kinds of perspectivism as Nietzsche had very well understood. Likewise, Nietzsche realized that a failure to reject a strong realist concept of righteousness was also a failure to reject belief in God completely because faith is the reality in itself. Apart from that, things have a real existence distinctively from their such and such appearances. And this is a belief inherited from the possibility of divine existence. And I, therefore, assume that a consistent defense of Aristotelian virtues is obliged to be open to the possibility of divine existence. Being open to the possibility of the existence of God is not, of course, the same as believing in God. ... However, it is important to consider this: Just as in a person's life, divine grace is effective, even if the person does not realize it, likewise, the person can reveal the faith in God in her life, even if she does not realize herself as a believer (1996, p. 677-678).

This second answer to MacIntyre seems to be consistent with his first answer. In the first answer, MacIntyre does not see any requirements for theology in the understanding of morality even if the person will never understand the character of morality entirely because of the lack of true self-knowledge, which can be obtained only through the divine light. MacIntyre says precisely:

> I hold not that a loss of theistic belief produces a loss of moral belief and a

change of practice but rather that a change in the character of morality is at least partly responsible for the modern inability to accept theistic belief (1969, p. 39).

So, there will be no change in moral practice even one does not believe in God. Nevertheless, the necessity of moral realism depends on religion. At least the necessity of being open to the idea of God, without involving particular any theistic religion is what MacIntyre makes obligatory for a moral person. What does it mean now? Can the person be a moral person even without achieving any perfected understanding of her morality? For MacIntyre, yes! However, this is not the desired position since MacIntyre understands morality, not as a destination but a process, a journey. The moral subject in this journey is likely to face moral dilemmas in the future, and the possibility of misinterpreting the principles of natural law. Therefore, in the first place, rejection of God on a person's moral journey may not be an obstacle for her morality due to her obedience to the natural law. However, as said before, the human mind will always need God's presence so that it can fully understand or complete itself in the teleological moral journey. In the end, she has to be at least open to the idea of God for a rationally justified moral life; otherwise, what prevents her from becoming an emotivist person?

There is a severe difficulty that must be clarified. It arises from the situation of forcing the atheist to think about the existence of God. The difficulty is about how MacIntyre understands the concept of atheism. That MacIntyre thinks an atheist person can also be open to the existence of God should mean that he does not accept the possibility of absolute atheism as Nietzsche had realized? The answer seems a yes. But how can we persuade an atheist moral person to think of her morality in this way? Are there any such atheists in the world who denies God but is open to the possibility of God? Moreover, what is the conception of atheism?

MacIntyre does not answer these questions and also does not bring them into the discussion. However, the idea of God can help to understand MacIntyre's standpoint. The God of MacIntyre is typically the God of theism. God of theism for MacIntyre does not exist in the way that "coconuts" and "neutrons" exist. Believing in the existence of a God involves believing in the existence of a God who has a relationship with

everything that one does and values. In *God, Philosophy and Universities,* MacIntyre answers to the question of "What kind of God must be believed in morality?" He replies that this is the only one God of theistic religions as in Christianity, Judaism and Islam exists. For these religions God is a necessary being. Therefore, the nonexistence of God is unthinkable (2009a, p.8, 5, 38). So an atheist becomes the person who could not understand the concept of God. If he could, he would not be an atheist. Thus, the atheist's rejection of God conceptually becomes anomalous and invalid. So there can be just *pseudo-atheism* and *pseudo-atheists* but not as real. Therefore, it can simply be proposed that MacIntyre does not believe in the possibility of any absolute atheism but just *pseudo-atheism*. Since this ontological necessity, MacIntyre can force the practical moral atheist into believing in the possibility of God's existence.

Conclusion

This study revealed how MacIntyre systematically developed his understanding of the relationship between religion and morality. In the first part, the article summarized MacIntyre's initial approach to the relation of morality with religion in a critical way. It showed how young MacIntyre eschewed a direct reference to religion in the explanation of morality. Moreover, this part pointed out that while young MacIntyre advocated a moral realism against morality espoused by modern emotivists, he failed in explaining the ground of his moral realism. The article identified this as a lacuna in MacIntyre's moral philosophy.

The second part investigated the Thomistic period of MacIntyre in terms of moral realism and pointed out that MacIntyre has filled this lacuna with the God of Thomism. Here the study explained how MacIntyre has used religion as the foundation of morality. Unlike morality embraced by modernity, MacIntyre has given us an explainable and justifiable morality thanks to a reference to religion or the existence of God.

Since this religion-based morality has many grave implications for atheism, the third part of the paper is devoted to MacIntyre's defense of his theory against the possibility of an atheist's moral behavior. MacIntyre never denies the possibility of an atheist's moral behavior because such practices are with us in daily life. Nevertheless, his theory of morali-

ty after his Thomistic-shift creates a significant puzzle to solve. How can an atheist be moral if morality needs religion? At this point, MacIntyre makes one of his most important contributions to moral theory by differentiating morality in practice from morality in theory. His simple solution says that while moral behaviors without reference to religion/God is possible in practice, a logical justification of those behaviors inescapably beg for the existence of God.

MacIntyre, however, leaves us with unanswered questions. How can an atheist defend his moral behavior by continuing to be an atheist? He seems to be avoiding confrontation with this question. Therefore, if the debate is to be moved forward, it can start from this point.

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Öz: "Nasıl yaşamalıyım?" sorusu MacIntyre'ın ahlak felsefesinde merkez bir yer edinir. MacIntyre en meşhur kitabı Erdem Peşinde boyunca modern ahlak felsefesini bu soruya rasyonel ve meşru bir cevap veremediği için eleştirir. Onun ahlak projesi temelde bu soruya verilecek bir yanıtla şekillenir. Bu soruya yanıt vermedeki kararlılığı büyük bir yankı uyandıracak cinstendir, çünkü o, dinin fi-

lozoflar arasında cazibesini kaybettiği bir dönemde din ya da Tanrı düşüncesini ahlakı açıklamak için kullanır. Bununla birlikte MacIntyre din ve ahlak arasındaki ilişkiyi tam ve detaylı bir şekilde hiçbir zaman tartışmaz. Bu nedenle onun ahlak teorisi için dine herhangi bir referansının incelenmesi birbirinden çok farklı eserleri içindeki yine birbirinden farklı ifadelerinin sentezlenmesine ihtiyaç duyar. Bunu yaparak makale eleştirel bir bakış eşliğinde MacIntyre'ın hem teorik hem de pratik alanda ahlak felsefesinde Tanrı'nın rolüne dair zamanla gelişen anlayışının tam bir resmini elde etmeyi amaçlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler: MacIntyre, Tanrı, ahlak, din, teizm, ateizm, ahlaki realizm, duyguculuk.