
MacIntyre's Mean: Overcoming a Nietzschean-Weberian Spectrum of Excess and Deficiency

La equidistancia de MacIntyre: cómo superar el espectro nietzscheano-weberiano de exceso y deficiencia

RECIBIDO: 29 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 2023/ ACEPTADO: 12 DE DICIEMBRE DE 2023

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Cómo citar este artículo:

Kruger, R. (2024). MacIntyre's Mean: Overcoming a Nietzschean-Weberian Spectrum of Excess and Deficiency. *Revista Empresa y Humanismo*, 27(1), 57-80.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15581/015.XXVII.1.57-80>

Abstract: Alasdair MacIntyre's work has developed from influences spanning different schools of thought. One particular thread can be traced between the works of Nietzsche and Weber demonstrating MacIntyre's ability to respond to positions he opposes, as well as developing beyond their excesses and deficiencies. This work traces the Nietzschean origin to many of Weber's positions. From here it tracks the parallels and divergences of Weber to MacIntyre, specifically comparing the ideas of vocations and practices, and the pedagogies of each. Concluding in a discussion of MacIntyre's considerations of human flourishing, and how his overall position avoids the problematics of both Nietzsche's and Weber's over-individualism and relativism, the work argues for future engagement with other non-Thomist-Aristotelian influences on MacIntyre's thought.

Key words: Practices, Institutions, Vocations, Flourishing, History of Thought, Traditions, Rationalization, Charisma, The Will to Power, Pedagogy

Resumen: El trabajo de Alasdair MacIntyre se ha desarrollado a partir de influencias que abarcan diferentes escuelas de pensamiento. Se puede trazar un hilo particular entre las obras de Nietzsche y Weber que demuestra la capacidad de MacIntyre para responder a las posiciones a las que se opone, así como para desarrollarse más allá de sus excesos y deficiencias. Este trabajo remonta el origen nietzscheano a muchas de las posiciones de Weber. A partir de aquí rastrea los paralelos y divergencias de Weber con MacIntyre, comparando específicamente las ideas de vocaciones y prácticas, y las pedagogías de cada uno. Concluyendo con una discusión sobre las consideraciones de MacIntyre sobre el florecimiento humano, y cómo su posición general evita las problemáticas del sobreindividualismo y relativismo tanto de Nietzsche como de Weber, el trabajo aboga por un compromiso futuro con otras influencias no tomistas-aristotélicas en el pensamiento de MacIntyre.

Palabras clave: Prácticas, Instituciones, Vocaciones, Florecimiento, Historia del Pensamiento, Tradiciones, Racionalización, Carisma, Voluntad de Poder, Pedagogía

I. INTRODUCTION

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Max Weber (1864-1920) each view the modern world as riddled with problems but respond in a slightly different manners. Nietzsche, largely responding to German Romanticism and its consequences, sought to critique philosophy and religion. Weber, on the other hand, aimed at the problematics of a later ‘child of the Enlightenment:’ science (Löwith, 2003, 53). Nietzsche (1968; 1974; 1985; 1989) rages against the institutional, seeking the supreme, overcoming power of agency, resulting in an atomizing end. Contra this, Weber (1966; 1994; 2002; 2013a; 2013b; 2020) identifies the inescapability of modern institutions, which sap individuals through an endless process of rationalization leading to the *Stahlhartes Gehäuse*. While each identifies nihilism and relativism as problems (Nietzsche, 1968: 1-82; 1974: 181-182; Weber, 2002: 121), neither provide realistic means of addressing them (Nietzsche, 1985: 124-139; Weber, 2013b: 1111-1156; 2020: 30-42), instead developing polar extremes that have influenced social theory to this day: the unachievable atom of the *Übermensch*, or the inevitable routinization of charisma (Weber, 2013a, 246-254; 2013b, 1121-1123).

Nietzsche’s atomistic hope is opposed by Weber’s articulate hopelessness. Nietzsche seeks to rage against the Last Men, to seek the overcoming of the everyday and the institutional, but in doing so provides an impossibly atomistic means to it and canonizes arrogance and a lust for power. Weber seeks merely to survive, trapped in ‘islands of normativity,’ but in so doing surrenders to many of its corrupting influences. Each represents a range of excesses and deficiencies.

It is the ‘social mean’ between these excesses and deficiencies which Alasdair MacIntyre (1929-) seeks between these positions, where one can not merely survive the storm but progress socially, historically, and rationally, without being trapped in an ‘iron cage’ of rationalization or aimless agency, rejecting both the individualistic ethics of Weber and the rejection of ethics of Nietzsche (Lutz, 2009: 35). I will proceed historically by tracing responses to Enlightenment rationality in Nietzsche’s ideas, through Weber, to MacIntyre, before showing how MacIntyre’s concepts of practices, virtues, and human flourishing provide a healthy, balanced theoretical toolset for responding to the excesses and deficiencies of modernity without slipping into the isolated individualism of Nietzsche, or they captured individualism of Weber (Kruger, 2018; 2021). I am proceeding in recognition of many of the themes in this pa-

per being beyond the scope of any one work. After tracing the historical development from Nietzsche to Weber to MacIntyre, I focus on comparison between MacIntyre's accounts of practices with Weber's account of vocations, highlighting the pedagogical questions embedded in both MacIntyre's and Weber's accounts, and how they relate to questions of human flourishing. In doing so, I am providing the groundwork for wider engagements with questions of virtuous leadership within the context of practices, excellence within education, and the impact MacIntyre's concepts may have on a society which often finds itself on one extreme or the other between Weber and Nietzsche.

II. FROM NIETZSCHE TO WEBER

Nietzsche as a theorist represents a range of foci impossible to covered in a single work, even only insofar as they relate to Weber and MacIntyre. Central to these, however, are his critiques of religion (Kaufmann, 2013, xvi), the 'slave morality' it imposes on the individual (Nehamas, 2013, viii); and his coverage of the nihilism remaining in the wake of deteriorating religious world-views through such famous claims as 'God is dead' (Nietzsche, 1974: 95), a concept taken up by Weber (2020) in his account of the 'disenchantment of the world' (18). These represent necessary steps in Nietzsche's assertion that human will is the sole source of meaning (Kaufmann, 2013, xxi-xxii, 243-244; Nehamas, 2013, viii; Kaufmann, 1985, 115-116).

This willfulness attempted to reevaluate the already reevaluated values of the day, as can be seen in Nietzsche's (1989) account of how 'slave morality' became capable of "creating ideals and reversing values" (34) allowing for the 'revenge of the weak' through the changing of 'good and bad' to 'good and evil' (Nietzsche, 1989, 35-39). This 'slave revolt in morality' occurs through the development of resentment, which has as its essence a need for a "hostile external world," indeed, "its action is fundamentally [a] reaction" (37). This represents the opposite of Nietzsche's (1989) 'noble morality,' which "acts and grows spontaneously" (37). The tinted glasses of slave morality's resentment is for Nietzsche a power to brings down the 'Great Men' of noble morality.

Such accounts of morality also raise mediocrity to the highest standard (Nietzsche, 1989: 43) - to what MacIntyre might call virtuous. Such a 'tame man' has by Nietzsche's (1989) account gained "the right to make the bird of prey accountable for being a bird of prey" (45). The overtaking of the willful

man by the ‘tame man’ parallels the later concept of Weber’s (2002) ‘iron cage’ of the rationalized and bureaucratic world insofar as the iron cage constrains even the most willful personage within a structure of single-minded bureaucrats. One could be skilled in a range of areas - desiring greatness in all - but no matter how skillful and willful they are, they cannot ‘will themselves’ outside of the rationalized system they find themselves trapped in.

Despite the image that Nietzsche paints of a world dominated by resentment, he also, as noted, proposes the possibility of its overcoming. While the seemingly animalic elements of humanity appear lauded in some of his work, Nietzsche (1985) also notes that the solution to slave morality is not a return to this starting point, but a move forward, a seeking of the *Übermensch* (124; Kaufmann, 2013: 308-309). The animalic aspect of early man is not the overman’s telos, for Nietzsche (1985) conceptualizes as man as a rope, “tied between beast and overman ... over an abyss”, (126) which must be crossed in a timely fashion, as:

The time has come for man to plant the seed of his highest hope. His soil is still rich enough. But one day his soil will be poor and domesticated, and no tall tree will be able to grow in it. Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whirl! I say unto you: one must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star. Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the *last man*. (Nietzsche, 1985: 129, emphasis original)

This ‘last man’ is the telos of slave morality’s resentment for Nietzsche, where one’s life is comfortable and safe; where “[e]verybody wants the same ... [and] whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse” (Nietzsche, 1985: 130). The overcoming of the ‘last men’ requires what Nietzsche describes as ‘three metamorphoses of the spirit,’ using the metaphors of the camel, lion, and child.

A beast of burden, the camel reacts according to the wills of others (Nietzsche, 1985: 138), while the lion asserts its own will - still in response to these wills of others - creating freedom for itself through “a sacred ‘No.’” (139). It is the resistance against submission, a reaction catalyzing the birth of new values by creating a freedom wherein they can breathe. Despite this, Nietzsche still asks:

Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes.' For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who has been lost to the world now conquers his own world. (Nietzsche, 1985: 139).

All of this - the abyss which must be crossed between beasthood and overcoming, the move from a beast of burden to a creature capable of opposing with a 'no' and then a creature capable of creating with a 'yes;' overcoming the ressentiment all of humanity wallows in - shows that while Nietzsche is often painted as a nihilist, Weber actually took up this mantle more fully, leaving behind the hope for overcoming embedded in Nietzsche.

While many of Nietzsche's critiques still hold today, and he presents many proactive and willful positions, it is clear he was still in a state of reaction, stuck within the traditions he sought to tear down and exist outside. These traditions represent the social-historical context within which any claims to 'human will' can become intelligible at all. This is evident in his rejection of Christianity, where the externality of his standpoint reinforces Nietzsche's non-rational perspective. Because of this, we see the problematics of relativism arise here, as there is no reason why one position could be seen as 'better' than the other, and so the only result is that the non-rational aspect of will must be the sole means of judgment. MacIntyre (2008a) critiques this - and positions like it - by showing both how external critique is possible, but also only fully effective if there is some internality. One must show how a given tradition fails on its own terms in some respect for that tradition to acknowledge the critique, making it effective (349-369). MacIntyre is on to something here, as Christianity (and religion generally) clearly survived Nietzsche's various critiques. It is only within a given tradition - a given historical, social, moral, and epistemic context - that a claim to the superiority of will over 'morality' can be seen as intelligible. Indeed, while Nietzsche claims to reject entirely the modern world, MacIntyre argues his rejection is a response still trapped in the modern world (Wain, 1995: 107).

Despite his attempt to operate outside tradition, Nietzsche still relied on aspects of older traditions (Kaufmann, 2013: 110). Kaufmann argued that Nietzsche's critical diagnoses represent merely a responsive

reevaluation, and [that] this consists in nothing beyond what Socrates did: 'applying the knife vivisectionally to the very virtues of the time' ... The

‘revaluation’ is not a new value-legislation but reverses prevalent valuations that reversed ancient valuations. It is not arbitrary, but an internal criticism. ... In Hegelian terms, Nietzsche’s attitude is positive insofar as he negates a negation (Kaufmann, 2013: 111-113).

This ‘revaluation’ is for Nietzsche a recurrent process, a catalytic reformulation of values. While Nietzsche seems to touch on the same necessary internality of critique that MacIntyre points to, he does so unconsciously, believing it possible to simply will oneself outside of tradition altogether, ignorant of the fact that we are all trapped within a series of traditions by both Kaufmann and MacIntyre’s accounts.

Weber (1994) seems to have given a more realistic account by noting how charisma can undo tradition, but that we are trapped in an iron cage of rationality, and all charismatic authority eventually returns to tradition or legal-rationality (32-46; Freund, 1969: 243-244). Despite this, we can see the Nietzschean account of crossing the abyss towards overcoming man influencing Weber’s account of charisma, which he describes as representing a catalytic “break with continuity, whether legal or traditional; it overturns institutions, it challenges the established order and customary restraints and appeals to a new concept of human relationships. It is both destructive and constructive” (Freund, 1969, 233), and the charismatic leader, who “draws his legitimacy from sources within himself, independently of all external criteria”. (Freund, 1969: 233). However, all such ‘overcomings’ are more or less trapped upon the ‘islands of normativity’ Weber (2020) has described out as disconnected from one another, adrift in a sea of a-rationality, where the polytheism of values cannot be judged by any rational means (30-32). The crossing of such abysses seems to represent from a Nietzschean perspective the possibility of bridging the gaps between the ‘islands of normativity’ Weber describes, as well as overcoming the norms upon a given island. This represents a difference with Weber, however, as charisma, despite often being a revolutionary means of overcoming, is an overcoming trapped within a given sphere of values and normativity, and thus unlike Nietzsche’s idea of the *Übermensch*, it is always temporary (Freund, 1969: 243-244).

Because of this there are two important distinctions to make between Nietzsche and Weber: first, charisma for Weber is inherently beholden to the crowd – one is only charismatic if they receive the recognition and approval of the social space they attempt to exercise their charisma in (Weber, 1994: 32-46; Weber, 2013a: 242). While it might be easy to see the charismatic figure as expressing a will to power and overtaking the people around them, Nietzs-

che (1968) notes that praise and gratitude actually represent assertions of the will to power, that those who affirm the charisma of others “claim the right of being able to affirm, of being able to dispense honors”, and that gratitude and affirmation represent a “virtuous revenge” (406-407). This shows that Weber’s charismatic figure merely represents an ‘individual’ for Nietzsche with a modest and unconscious form of the will to power (411-412).

Second, Nietzsche’s account of the overman and the overcoming of the problems in modern human society are individualist accounts, of a sort. The assertion of one’s will in overcoming one’s surrounding, in crossing the abyss, in the metamorphosis of one’s spirit, all represent a singularity, an expression of noble spirit. Nietzsche (1968: 407) distinguishes between the individual and the person, or the ‘stronger’ and ‘strongest’ type of man. The individual seeks a modest freedom from the overpowering domination of society through the recognition of others. The noble person seeks not the power of others, imposed upon them in the form of praise, but takes a position of power wherein the world is full of instruments beholden to them (Nietzsche, 1968: 407). The *Übermensch* is such a person and so cannot, due to their overcoming of concern for the power of others, be placed parallel to Weber’s conception of the charismatic figure.

III. FROM WEBER TO MACINTYRE

Weber both builds upon, and challenges, Nietzsche. His account of charisma takes Nietzsche’s ideas and test-runs them against the social world of his age. In doing so, Weber identifies problems in Nietzsche’s account, given the constant return to traditional or legal-rational authority through the routinization of charisma (Weber, 1994: 32-46; Weber 2013b: 1122-1123; Freund, 1969, 243-244). Nietzsche (1968: 545-546) might respond by claiming this is an example of eternal recurrence (Kaufmann, 2013: 319-328), which doesn’t necessitate a nihilistic failure of charisma, but may actually provide the hope that purpose can be attained in life. In some strange inversion, Nietzsche’s lack of ‘infinite progress’ provides a hope for overcoming absent in Weber’s nihilistic interpretation. Indeed, Weber’s (2020) recognition of the ‘infinite progress’ of modern civilization ends in the nihilistic lack of “any ultimate purpose” (18). MacIntyre (2017: 314-315) responds to this by building an account of progress where because our full human telos is always slightly beyond our understanding at any one time, we can never claim an ‘End of History,’ despite maintaining a progressive understanding of time. Indeed, in

his discussion of practices, MacIntyre (2012) notes that: “Practices never have a goal or goals fixed for all time ... It therefore turns out not to be accidental that every practice has its own history and a history which is more and other than that of the improvement of the relevant technical skills” (193-194, emphasis added).

We can see Weber being trapped in a similar individualism to Nietzsche, as “if not in the charisma of new leaders, [then] only [through] the personality of the solitary individual” can this loss of meaning or freedom be opposed, and this “inner autonomy, which [must] be heroically maintained, has been threatened, because within modern society there is no longer any legitimate order that could guarantee the cultural reproduction of the corresponding value orientations” (Habermas, 1984: 247). The individual is trapped, as noted above, in a system Nietzsche saw as something which could be overcome individually, but that Weber notes cannot be overcome. So, unlike Nietzsche’s overman, we are at best trapped as the individual who finds purpose in their trapped state, or at worst trapped as the ‘last men’ Weber (2002) describes as “specialists without spirit, [and] hedonists without heart” (121). This recognition “that no moral order will be revealed, that no providential good will be made manifest, that no reason will work through history to reconcile moral conflicts” (Reitter and Wellmon, 2020: xxiii), the impossibility of a singular morality – Weber’s (2020) ‘polytheism of values’ (30-32) which he felt himself to be cast adrift within – resulted in his apparent hopelessness.

Although Weber takes a more Nietzschean influenced individualism in his understanding of leadership, charisma, and politics as vocations, and MacIntyre takes a more collectivist approach, a bridge exists here between the projects of each (Breen, 2016: 153-174), where MacIntyre can build on the hopelessness of Weberian institutions with the hope of practices. While a Weber-MacIntyre dialogue could cover a wide range, we will focus here on elaborating MacIntyre’s conceptions of practices and how they relate to Weber’s vocations, along with the shared pedagogical concerns within MacIntyre and Weber, and how they point towards questions of human flourishing.

Despite the shifts in MacIntyre’s thought over his long career, from a Marxist (MacIntyre, 2001a; 1998; Blackledge and Davidson, 2009; Knight, 1998: 2-3), to a Post-Marxist with Aristotelian influences (MacIntyre, 2012; 2005; 2001b; 1976), to a Thomistic-Aristotelian position (MacIntyre, 2012; 2008a; 2008b; 2017), MacIntyre (2012) has spent much of his career engaging with precisely the problem surrendered to by Weber: the irreducibility of values and their disconnection from scholarly pursuits (26). MacIntyre cha-

llenges both these positions, critiquing Weber and his influences (114). While he notes the general accuracy of Weber's descriptions of the bureaucratic, rationalized world, MacIntyre is critical of the inaccessibility of values (86). While moving away from his early Marxism, he still identifies Marx as "one of the richest sources of ideas about modern society" (262), and has continued to engage with its critical potential throughout his mature work (Lutz, 2012: 13, 39), likewise, MacIntyre's (2012) critiques of Weber do not imply a wholesale rejection of his insights (109).

Weber divided values and knowledge by a seemingly impassable void, resulting in what Freund (1969) called "the individualist undecided between two types of activity: the Promethean and the Epimethean" (24). MacIntyre, on the other hand, presents a case with an eye to Weber's recognition of the socially and historically specific differences between value-positions (and knowledge-positions), which need not result in such an individualistic cage. In developing his idea of 'traditions of inquiry,' MacIntyre recognized the historicity of various epistemic and ethical positions (Lutz, 2009: 39), without falling into the traps of incommensurability, untranslatability, and atomized individualism. Lutz (2009) notes that

MacIntyre holds that substantive rationality, both theoretical and practical, is *tradition-constituted* and *tradition-constitutive*. This is MacIntyre's theory of the role of tradition in ethics. His theory embodies his criticism and rejection of the Enlightenment project of justifying morality, as well as his criticism and rejection of the conclusions of postmodern efforts to explain morality away (Lutz, 2009: 33, emphasis added).

While MacIntyre doesn't provide a singular conception of 'tradition', (Kruger, 2018: 74), he does provide over the range of his intellectual career an understanding that a tradition can represent a range of historical and social structures and institutions, both external to individuals and carried and reproduced within them, aimed at shared ethical and epistemic questions (MacIntyre, 2008a: 349; Porter, 2003: 50-51). 'Tradition' is thus "referential, at least in the broad sense, [that] it has a subject matter, it is 'about' something that it mediates to the intellects of those participating in it" (Porter, 2003: 50), and so is an epistemic, linguistic and cultural concept (MacIntyre, 2008a: 349), that it is "constituted by debates over the good" (Porter, 2003: 50) and so is also an ethical concept centred around the concept of moral community.

Tradition is thus for MacIntyre the source of rationality, one that doesn't slip into the abyss of relativism (Lutz, 2009: 33-64). This differs from We-

ber for whom rationality dominates man in its current situation, and Nietzsche who rejects rationality entirely in favor of man. As Lutz (2009: 33) notes, MacIntyre rejects the postmodern theories which took up Nietzsche and attempted to “explain morality away” just as he rejects the Enlightenment project of moral justification. But further to this, he also rejects the Weberian conclusion that the Enlightenment project was become trapped in an ‘iron cage.’ By embedding rationality in tradition, the communities which make it up, and the historical context it exists in – themes adopted from Marx and maintained throughout MacIntyre’s career (Lutz, 2009: 39-40) – MacIntyre connects humans, and their everyday practices, to rationality as participatory agents rather than making us beholden to systems entirely outside our control.

Traditions represent both historically situated phenomena, but also elements of people’s ‘prereflective backgrounds’, (MacIntyre, 2017: 111; Pinkard, 2003, 192-194; Kruger, 2018: 53-55), helping MacIntyre analyze how values can be subjects of knowledge, and how knowledge can be impacted by values, without surrendering to absolute relativism (Porter, 2003: 45-49):

Most of our contemporaries [cannot recognize] ... traditions that they have already implicitly ... given their allegiance to. ... Instead they tend to live betwixt and between, accepting usually unquestioningly the assumptions of ... [t]his type of self which has too many half-convictions and too few settled coherent convictions, too many partly formulated alternatives and too few opportunities to evaluate them systematically (MacIntyre, 2008a: 397).

Despite the often irrational and particular starting point of many traditions, MacIntyre (2008a: 354) argues that traditions themselves have the capacity to become more rational insofar as they function as traditions over time (Graham, 2003, 34), and so despite the possibility of the ‘primordial outsider’ who starts up a tradition at some point in history, this does not actually represent the relativist position some accuse MacIntyre of (Haldane, cited by Graham, 2003: 33).

IV. PARALLELS AND CONTRADICTIONS

1. Practices and Vocations

Embedded within his concept of 'traditions,' MacIntyre develops a concept seemingly related to Weber's account of 'vocations' or 'callings.' This is MacIntyre's concept of 'practices'. Weber first describes the idea of a 'calling' in the Protestant Ethic when describing the idea of a quasi-religiously influenced choice to adhere oneself to a particular job or purpose, embedding a normative significance to the work done (Baehr and Wells, 2002, xviii). Such an attitude sees "work as an end in itself, as a 'calling'" (Weber, 2002: 18). Weber (2002) described how modernity hollowed out of the concept of its divine basis, resulted in 'empty callings,' (121) and Weber (2020) responds to the emptiness of the shells of the vocations of the past by proposing a 'stiff upper lip' in one's choice to submit to a particular vocation in an age where any ultimate values have retreated into the private realm of individual choice (41-42).

For Weber (2020), a vocation in the contemporary age is something that must be self-sufficient as an end-in-itself, at least by its own standards (24-26). This internalization of standards, and presuppositions, makes each vocation – be it in the realm of science, jurisprudence, aesthetics, etc. – self-sufficient. All, however, fall prey to the inaccessibility of the first principles and final ends which make up the vocation's foundations and goals, leaving only "hyperspecialized, never-ending enterprise[s]" (Weber, 2020: 17).

While there are some similarities, MacIntyre offers more hopeful, less isolated concepts. For instance, a practice is defined as:

any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended (MacIntyre, 2012: 187).

The goods MacIntyre (2012) claims are internal to practices are appreciated for their own sake rather than as a means to an end. Indeed, there are "no standards prior to practices, because standards arise organically from the practices themselves" (Lutz, 2009: 41). MacIntyre uses the example of tea-

ching a child to play chess and appreciate chess-the-game, rather than just chess-the-means-to-candy-if-I-win to distinguish between the goods internal to, and external to, a given practice (188-189). This parallels Weber's account of vocations, where the vocation is seen as having both internal and external goods: for example, succeeding at science is seen as an achievement of value regardless of whether it comes with external-money or internal-prestige attached to it.

Also important to MacIntyre's (2012) concept of practices is the fact that those who "lack the relevant experience are incompetent thereby as judges of internal goods" for x or y practice (189). This is because there are internal standards of excellence to each practice, and we cannot be initiated into a practice without accepting the authority of the best of those standards that have been realized so far (190). Weber (2020) sees a similar 'barrier of judgment' within vocations, where the external goods of a vocation can be judged by any, but the internal goods can only be accurately judged by those embedded within the vocation (24). Weber's example of a doctor's work to keep someone alive and minimize their suffering is a good example here: the question of 'is life worth living' is external – Weber claims – to the vocation of being a doctor, and so one is not better suited to answer the question as a doctor than as a layperson (25). Inversely, one who is not a doctor cannot properly judge the internal goods of the vocation, for instance the skills which might make one more efficient.

While Weber's account of vocations seems to present the skills merely as the sum of 'goods internal to the vocation,' MacIntyre makes a distinction between 'goods,' 'virtues,' and 'technical skills,' in his account of practices. Virtues, or excellences (MacIntyre, 2012: 181), MacIntyre (2012) partially defines as "acquired human qualit[ies] the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices", (191), helping to distinguish them from technical skills (193), and institutions (194). Drawing from his Aristotelian influences, MacIntyre represents these virtues as processes, things we 'do,' not merely things we 'have' or roles that we 'fill' (184): the recognition of which is a long learning process, a series of teloi not fixed (193), and never fully reached or achieved (MacIntyre, 2017: 314-315), where the living-out of the virtues is a continuous aspect of living one's life necessarily tied to the practices we engage in (MacIntyre, 2012: 187-191). This also helps demonstrate that practices are "not static; they change. Their goals and standards of excellence are continually reconstituted by the prudential judgments of their participants" (Lutz, 2009: 41). The virtues which

constitute a practice are thus 'lived-out' in the 'doing' and constant re-evaluation of the excellences required to achieve this or that good, as well as the re-evaluation of the goods themselves. Lutz (2009) demonstrates this, noting that "moral life is a practice, and its standards develop over time as reflections of the experience of a person or tradition enables people to make general judgments about the justice and prudence of human actions," (41) using the example of how slavery and racism were once considered justified by otherwise virtuous persons, but how this changed over time through the engagement of persons in practices.

This helps to distinguish virtues from technical skills and institutions, as technical skills do not in themselves account for the ends they serve, whereas practices – which often make use of technical skills – participate in the setting of goals within that practice (193-194). Practices are thus internally capable of setting their own ends, and the virtues embedded in the process of both identifying and achieving ends internal to the practice can in turn help direct the technical skills making up aspects of the practice (Porter, 2003: 40).

Institutions, on the other hand, are "characteristically and necessarily concerned with ... external goods", and in so being, cannot be interchangeably used in place of the idea of practices (MacIntyre, 2012: 194). While practices often rely on institutions for survival, the "creativity of the practice [is] always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution" (Ibid.). So we can see that practices sit between hollow technical skills and hollowing institutions: technical skills are capable of having goods internal to them, and external goods towards which they can be directed, but are incapable of directing the bearer towards those external goods; institutions on the other hand are typically the external means for directed skills towards (value-relevant) ends, that have been pre-established by the institution. An excellent example would be that of an academic discipline, say, sociology. As a practice, sociology would be distinguished holistically as something above and beyond its technical elements, and from the institutions it is related to. The same could be said of, say, chemistry as a practice, however given its more unified methodology, and agreed upon set of external goods, it resembles a more coherent practice than does sociology. This makes sense, however, given chemistry's longer history developing as a practice. Weber does not elaborate such components as clearly as MacIntyre in his account of vocations.

While Weber might parallel practices with vocations insofar as each has internal goods - MacIntyre would retort that practices exist in historical (and traditional) contexts connecting them to other practices which make up hu-

man life. In addition, MacIntyre not only gives specific accounts of virtues internal to a given practice (say, patience in the case of the practice of medicine), but also to practices generally (including truthfulness, justice, courage, and humility. [Wain, 2003: 232]). While goods and virtues may be internal to practices, both may rest across and beyond particular practices (MacIntyre, 2012: 200-225) – a non-rational, inaccessible space for Weber that divorces *this* vocation from *that* vocation. This can be envisioned as a Venn diagram of particular goods and virtues, overlapping between various practices – one’s attentiveness is virtuous in both engraving and painting, for instance – while vocations do not share this kind of interconnection.

2. Pedagogy

A final interesting area of comparison related to questions of vocations and practices are the pedagogical undercurrents in both Weber’s and MacIntyre’s accounts. Weber (2020) makes a clear case that a teacher is someone who must try to impart capacities to learn to their students, specific to the subject matter of the teacher’s expertise, without using the podium to make oneself a demagogue (32-36). MacIntyre (2008b) however notes that any learner within a practice or tradition faces a predicament (82), requiring two things:

a teacher and an obedient trust that what the teacher ... declares to be good reasons for transforming oneself into a different kind of person ... will turn out to be genuinely good reasons in the light afforded by that understanding ... which becomes available only to the transformed self. ... So a prerational reordering of the self has to occur *before* [we] can have an adequate standard by which to judge what is a good reason and what is not. And this reordering requires obedient trust, not only in the authority of this particular teacher, but in that of the whole tradition (MacIntyre, 2008b: 82-83, emphasis added).

We can see that MacIntyre’s pedagogical starting point is not that dissimilar from Weber’s, also that much like the prerational starting point of any tradition we have a prerational starting point for any person. So, with learning, one initially must simply ‘make a choice’ (Weber, 2020: 36); they cannot be taught how to choose if they don’t make the choice to be taught how to choose in the first place. While Weber (2020) claims teachers ought not to be guides or leaders (32), MacIntyre claims that – to a certain extent – this is precisely what they must be to help inculcate the necessary skills to be able to learn. Here we see a pedagogic dissonance start to develop between Weber

and MacIntyre, as the latter has an account of the process of inculcation of attitudes and dispositions which can impact that 'simple choice' in the form of his 'prereflective background(s)' (Kruger, 2018: 53-55), and sees it as a necessary starting point for learning, while the former laments this 'choice' as an unfortunately necessary consequence of the disconnect between facts and values.

Weber (2020) in essence waves off understanding why and how students come to teachers in the first place, the why and how they make the choice to sit in this classroom, learning this subject, with or without gusto, for some reason, merely operating on assumption that "[b]eing a teacher simply presupposes that teaching is something worth doing" (36). MacIntyre on the other hand gives us the tools to understand how the role of teacher and guide overlap - arguably a more useful theorization of pedagogical questions as it applies not just within an academic space, but within the larger social world of learning. We listen to (or reject) the lessons our parents teach us because they are our parents, not because they are 'teachers'. We hang on to the lessons taught by community members we respect because they are seen as role-models, not because they are teachers. Indeed, we sit in our first classes in university and take notes because we see our professors as figures worth listening to before we see them as teachers of a particular subject, and before we can judge the quality of their teaching by any standards internal to the subject being taught.

Here we see another difference between Weber and MacIntyre: While Weber presents teaching taking place within academia as an institution, and an 'island of normativity,' MacIntyre does not represent teaching as a practice in and of itself, arguing in fact that teaching is "never more than a means" to other ends, that "does not have its own goods," and therefore 'a teacher' is not a specific 'kind of life' (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002: 9; Wait, 2003: 228, 230-231). Indeed, "teachers are involved in a variety of practices" and so "teaching is an ingredient of every practice," rather than representing a practice by itself (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002: 8). All teaching is "for the sake of something else," for MacIntyre, and so "[t]he life of a teacher of mathematics, whose goods are the goods of mathematics, is one thing; a life of a teacher of music whose goods are the goods of music is another" (9). For MacIntyre, teaching is thus not a practice but a technical means whose "whole point is to help learners discover themselves within [a] practice". (Wain, 2003: 231). Indeed, teaching would "appear to qualify as an institution" given that the education system is oft dominated by bureaucracy and self-serving, self-regarding careerists (Wain, 2003: 231). This differs greatly from a Weberian account of te-

aching as a vocation. Teaching and learning represent not practices for MacIntyre but make up part of what it means to be a flourishing human being (Wise, 2019: 39).

3. Human Flourishing

For MacIntyre, human flourishing means “living well, which results from developing characteristics definitive of what it means to be a person”, and of these characteristics he lists two as central: “the capacity to reason and dependence upon other people” (Wise, 2019: 38). Despite their differential accounts of ethics, and the accessibility of the ‘ends’ of human life (Stoliarova, 2021: 2-4, 6-7; MacIntyre, 2017: 315), both MacIntyre and Weber offer accounts of how to ‘best proceed’ in life. MacIntyre’s account of human flourishing builds on traditions, virtues, practices, goods and teloi, and the narrative unity of the human life (Wise, 2019: 37-41; Kruger, 2018: 56-59, 79-90), while Weber retreats to a Nietzschean assertion of Will in ‘simply choosing’ and then excelling at the choice one has made due to the impossibility of rational choice outside a given vocation (Weber, 2002: 121; 2020: 30-32; Habermas, 1984: 247). This individualism leaves us at the mercy of a rationalized society where atomized persons must choose between vocations which are themselves both atomized and atomizing.

MacIntyre, unlike Weber, moves from the arbitrary starting point of initial choice to an articulation of how one may retrospectively judge that choice, and progress towards better choices. MacIntyre’s account of progress – importantly an account developed in a more contemporary historical moment than Weber’s – is an account of the progress of human communities, human knowledge, and individual human lives, all representing narrative quests of their own. In each of these contexts one can “always to flourish in virtue of possessing some set of characteristics” (MacIntyre, 2014: 65). This always takes place, MacIntyre argues, in a social and historical context where our relationships to the people, institutions, and traditions either aid in our accounts of what it means to flourish or in our understandings of what we can flourish in (MacIntyre, 2014: 67). Indeed, flourishing is intertwined with pedagogical processes, as MacIntyre claims that

What each of us has to do, in order to develop our powers as independent reasoners, and so to flourish *qua* members of our species, is to make the transition from accepting what we are taught by those earliest teachers to making our own independent judgments about goods, judg-

ments we are able to justify rationally to ourselves and to others (MacIntyre, 2014: 71, emphasis original).

Human flourishing is thus not a universal account of progress, but rather is specific-enough to allow for different kinds of flourishing in relation to different times, places, and activities we are seeking to flourish in (MacIntyre, 2014: 77), without falling into amoral relativism (Fives, 2008: 167). Indeed, human flourishing seems to situate MacIntyre's account of progress as an ongoing process: one who is flourishing - as a sociologist, as a friend, or as a human - is someone in an ongoing state of progress within the context of the tradition, relationship, or species that they are part of. This radically differs what may be seen as Weber's (2020) 'account of flourishing' merely covers how one is to achieve technical success in a rationalized world dominated by questions of calculability and instrumental function (18).

MacIntyre's account of human flourishing is in part a naturalist account of human nature. As Fives (2008) notes, we do not "flourish simply or solely as independent practical reasoners. We are, and remain, dependent rational animals as well" (175). This is much different from the 'survivalist' account drawn from Weber. Weber (2020) gives an account of what it means to be 'good' at such a vocation, to 'achieve' or 'improve' within the context of such a vocation, all seeming to boil down to the question of specialization (11) - which itself relies entirely on what MacIntyre (2012) would note as technical skills (193) and goods external to the practice (188). Not attempting to give any account of human nature, Weber's (2020) idea of 'flourishing' would simply be a state of prevailing within the context of a vocation (35).

V. CONCLUSION

While Nietzsche seeks to overcome the present, Weber (2020) cocoons themselves within the present, providing a 'first-aid kit' specifically for a disenchanted world and offering a means to "find and obey the daemon that holds in its hands the threads of our own life" (42, emphasis original). Their concerns about the rationalized, bureaucratized system of modernity are similar but their responses are different. Despite this, there is a shared individualism - for Nietzsche, the overcoming of the *Übermensch*, and for Weber, willful adherence to a given vocation. MacIntyre, on the other hand, seeks to better understand the epistemic and moral narratives acting as components of traditions in the social-historical world, and in so doing retains a practical

hope absent in both Nietzsche and Weber, by presenting an account “marked by deep, ethical involvement in social endeavors. The outcomes of these co-operative enterprises enrich people’s lives and contribute to a better society” (Wise, 2008: 41). This dialectical development of thought - from Nietzsche, to Weber, to MacIntyre - is in keeping with MacIntyre’s ideas about the communicability of traditions of inquiry and demonstrates the critique and progress of thought across time.

The focused nature of this work necessarily limits it in its breadth, however its applicability across a range of genres of consideration could take many forms. The comparison between practices and vocations is useful to any study of work, management, or business ethics (Schartz, 2009; Fernando & Moore, 2015; Sinnicks, 2018; Wilson, 2023; Bernacchio, 2023), and the pedagogical differences between MacIntyre and Weber represent a useful point of departure for the study of education, both practical and theoretical (Holmes, 1992; Wain, 1995, 2003; Wilcox, 1997; MacIntyre, 1999; MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002; Dunne, 2003; Dunne & Hogan, 2004) as well as some overlapping research into ethics across the aforementioned fields (Serrano del Pozo & Kreber, 2015; Pianezzi, Nørreklit, & Cinquini, 2020). This work also demonstrates one example of the depth of influence on MacIntyre of a range of thinkers which tend to lie outside the Thomist-Aristotelian realm of consideration, demonstrating that MacIntyre’s continued maintenance an eye to many of his early influences allows MacIntyre to better seek an Aristotelian mean between excess and deficiency in the development of this thought, avoiding the raging, atomizing willfulness of Nietzsche, and the resigned rationality of Weber.

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