Norberto Castillo, O.P. on The Phases of Scientific Discovery as Model for a Tradition in Moral Enquiry

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This study is on the contribution of Rev. Fr. Norberto M. Castillo, O.P., a Filipino Dominican whose works in Philosophy of Science are treated in this article as important in responding to the challenge of building a 'tradition in moral inquiry' that was suggested by the works of Prof. Alasdair MacIntyre. The article will discuss Castillo's three phases of a creative act: envisioning, invisioning and convisioning, and will use these phases as heuristic guide for the task of articulating a 'tradition in moral inquiry.' The study ends with the claim that the failure to arrive at a 'tradition in moral inquiry' is brought by the lack of a sustained reflection over moral matters which can only be achieved when an attempt to mimic the mentioned phases of scientific creative act is done in the field of moral philosophy.

Keywords: *Tradition, science, envisioning, invisioning, convisioning, moral philosophy, Filipino Dominicans*

Introduction

What is written herein is meant as a contribution to a yearlong project of this journal in cooperation with UST Center for Religious Studies and Ethics. The same project is also directed towards the global celebration of the 800th anniversary of the Order of Preachers. These Dominicans in the Philippines initiated the endeavor of articulating the contributions of their brethren in the fields of theology, philosophy, education, natural sciences, ecclesiastical history, and in other areas – those works and initiatives that have been

instrumental to the animation of the local academic and ecclesial community. The particular subject of this study is the contribution of Fr. Norberto M. Castillo, O.P. It hopes to initiate a dialogue between the thoughts of Fr. Castillo and Prof. Alasdair MacIntyre, both of whom are noted as credible readers of Aristotle and Aquinas.

Fr. Castillo's work – other than his notable service as an administrator of Dominican institutions in the Philippines and abroad[1] - in the field of *Philosophy of Science* is well-known.[2] Less known however is Fr. Castillo's dedication and passion as a teacher of Ethics (Moral Philosophy) and practical reasoning. These are probably the two areas in philosophy that are closest to his heart: Philosophy of Science and Ethics. He even began his foreword on *The Desire to Know* with a statement that is as much loaded with ethical thoughts as it is with concepts from Philosophy of Science: "A written text is oftentimes a product of *encounter*. The *other* becomes a source of wonder, of change or of movement… The *other* comes in different forms and shades. It could be an immersion with Nature, or an interaction with peers, or with the community at large."[3] Later, on the same foreword, he makes explicit this link and says, "Empirical science weds humanistic sciences, and is transformed into a different mix which centers on man and humanity. The mature form of empirical science takes humanities as its apex."[4] Then in his discussion about scientific discoveries, he also announces that "[A]s a study of the future, much of science's potentials are lost opportunity if it avoids its incontrovertible ethical dimension."[5]

This perception about the disposition and work of the thinker, Norberto M. Castillo, O.P., has guided this study's attempt to articulate the relevance of his thoughts in addressing the problem on the progress of moral enquiry which has also been a focal concern of Prof. Alasdair MacIntyre who claimed in the prologue of the third edition of his *After Virtue* that one of the central theses that has remained a core conviction even after the publication of his major books: *After Virtue* (1971), *Whose*

[1] A quick glance at Fr. Castillo's curriculum vitae available at UST Faculty of Philosophy reveals that he has been Director and Principal of the Angelicum School from 1971-1982, Vice-president and Dean at Letran College in 1976-1980, Socius to the Prior Provincial of the Dominican Province of the Philippines in 1977-1980, Academic consultant of the Angelicum College in Quezon City on 1994-2002, Dean of UST Faculty of Philosophy in 1994-1996 and again in 2008-2012, Regent of Studies of the Philippine Dominican Province in 1977-1980 and also 1992-1996, Rector and President of the University of Santo Tomas from 1982-1990 (two terms), Prior of Santa Maria Maggiore in 2005-2008, UST Vice-rector for Religious Affairs in 2010, and Director of the Ecclesiastical Publications in 2009-2013. This is but an excerpt however of his long list of accomplishments.

[2] One of his most recent publications is a collection of his articles in Philosophy of Science, *The Desire to Know* (Manila: UST Faculty of Philosophy, 2012). On his foreword for this book, he explained why he dedicated most of his lifework on 'Philosophy of Science' (see p. ix). All citations from Castillo's work, unless specifically indicated as otherwise, are taken from this book, which shall be referred to in this article as DK.

[3] DK, p. vii.

[4] DK, p. x.

[5] DK, p. 104.

Justice? Which Rationality? (1988), *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990) and *Dependent Rational Animal* (1999), together with the critical and constructive commentaries on them, is: "it is only possible to understand the dominant culture of advanced modernity adequately from a standpoint external to that culture. That culture has continued to be one of unresolved and apparently unresolvable *moral* and other disagreements in which the evaluative and normative utterances of the contending parties present a problem of interpretation."[6]

I however beg the readers to allow me to start with a disclaimer. What I am about to say in this piece, and I hope that I would do justice to the task expected of me, is not to be taken as 'the' contribution of Castillo in the field of philosophy. Such task should fall on the desk of somebody who has been working within the field of Castillo's first expertise - Philosophy of Science. This work is a mere attempt to articulate the philosopher's contribution to an area which has been consistently part of his philosophical career but which may not have been always associated with him when people talk about him as a philosopher – ethics or moral philosophy. I find support for the arguments that I am about to make from the fact that Castillo has been teaching Ethics (Moral Philosophy) in most parts of his career as a philosophy teacher.[7] Moreover, we find his speeches colored with articulations on ethical life and conduct.[8] I dare even say that in his work as a philosopher of science, his commitment to ethical and moral life has always been prominent. He once even commented, reading a book by Claudia Baracchi, that 'ethics' could indeed be the first philosophy.[9] In fact, such commitment to ethical life had become more pronounced when he accepted the ministry of serving as a confessor at Santa Maria Maggiore, where he has served for several years – a task that has always been close to his heart as a Dominican.

[6] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 3rd edition (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), p. ix. This book shall hereafter be referred to as AV.

[7] Ethics was one of the courses that Castillo handled at the Dominican House of Studies in Quezon City when he began teaching there in 1968 (see Castillo's curriculum vitae available at UST Faculty of Philosophy). He continues to teach the course throughout the years as he handled the same subject at the Faculty of Philosophy of Science in 2012 just before he went back to Rome for an assignment at the Maria Maggiore.

[8] In his inaugural speech as Rector of the University of Santo Tomas on June 14, 1982, Castillo emphasized the virtue of charity among others, "I ask you most especially to pray that God may help me always to put on the garment of charity, because charity is more luminous than humanism, more effective than martial law, more understanding and tolerant than liberalism…" [Norberto Castillo, O.P. *Timeless Thoughts and Timely Reflections*. (Manila: UST Press, 1986), p. 5]. Then, in his address to the graduates of the Ecclesiastical Faculties, Civil Law and Graduate School in 1983, he emphasized that "the more we know the more prudent we should get to be. Prudence, humility, the readiness to recognize mistakes and error are the marks of one who most approximates the title of a wise man" (Ibid., p. 34).

[9] See Claudia Baracchi, *Aristotle's Ethics as First Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). Castillo expressed agreement with the author's perspective when the former reviewed the book in *Philippiniana Sacra*, vol. 47/139 (2012), pp. 258-260.

Lastly, I also had the privilege of working on the thoughts of Prof. MacIntyre when I was completing my dissertation which was also done under the guidance of Fr. Castillo. It has been my experience that as I was doing the chapters of my work, I find Castillo[10] commenting on most of them: "these are very close to what I always say in the classroom." Perhaps, this could make me feel rather optimistic about the task that is laid at hand. So I begin the work.

Tradition and the progress of enquiry

MacIntyre begins his *After Virtue* with a chapter entitled "A Disquieting Suggestion,"[11] where he speaks of a thought-experiment in which 'the natural sciences have suffered the effects of a catastrophe.'[12] He then claims that the resultant culture is one where the beliefs presupposed by the expressions in natural sciences "would have been lost and there would appear to be an element of arbitrariness of choice in their application…"[13] The intention however is not to show that this was indeed the true state of natural sciences, but to allow us to see that "in the actual world which we inhabit the language of morality is in the same state of grave disorder."[14]

MacIntyre revisited this comparison between scientific and moral enquiries when he delivered the Gifford lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 1988.[15] At the beginning of the lectures, he pointed out the difficulty of realizing the intentions of Lord Gifford in instituting the lectures. MacIntyre has even quoted a portion of Gifford's will which says, "I wish… the lecturers to treat their subject as a strictly natural science… I wish it to be considered just as astronomy or chemistry is,"[16] and he later added that the culture which conditions Adam Gifford in composing his 'will' was indeed confident on the completion of the task that he has requested from his lecturers. Lord Gifford himself, MacIntyre attested, is confident on the "inevitable progress in 'the advance and improvement of ethics'."[17] Gifford, moreover, is also quite certain that if there were lapses in laying down the first principles, we will soon realize them because "nature will find out our failure."[18]

MacIntyre however, after the span of 100 years from the *Lectures'* institution, noted the difficulty of implementing this wish. He says:

[10] From hereon, I would refer to Fr. Castillo simply as Castillo and to Prof. MacIntyre simply as MacIntyre.

[11] AV, pp. 1-5.

[12] cf. AV, p. 1.

[13] AV, p. 1.

[14] AV, p. 2.

[15] These lectures were published as *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990). This book shall herein be referred to as TRVME.

[16] TRVME, p. 9.

[17] TRVME, p. 22.

[18] TRVME, p. 22.

> … certainly in the hundred years which have elapsed since Adam Gifford's death, astronomy and chemistry have both exhibited continuous progress, so that it is possible to say relatively uncontroversially in what respects the astronomy and chemistry of 1988 are superior to those of 1888 and how this superiority was achieved. But with the subject matter prescribed for Gifford lecturers – that is, natural theology understood as comprehending within itself enquiry into the foundations of ethics – it has of course been quite otherwise. Not only has there been no progress in respect of generally agreed results of such enquiries, but there is not even agreement as to what the standard of rational progress ought to be.[19]

Reiterating the thoughts that he had already suggested in the *After Virtue*, he agrees that there was a real progress in the natural sciences. But, such progress is hardly evident in ethics not only because future philosophers are still yet to prosper in areas where their predecessors have failed[20] "but because in fact morality… is not in significant and central respects susceptible to rational justification."[21]

MacIntyre argues that such a progress in scientific enquiry does not mean that there were no differences and multiplicities in scientific pronouncements. He noted, for example, the incommensurable claims of the texts of Bachelard, Kuhn and Feyerabend.[22] Progress does not preclude disagreements. It does not deny multiple readings. It does not suggest even that there was a homogeneous movement in the history of science. Yet, MacIntyre contends that progress is only possible within the framework of a tradition. Talking about progress in scientific enquiry, MacIntyre says: "Remember, for example, how in the history of early modern science what have been treated as paradigmatic cases of incommensurability in disagreement by writers as different as Bachelard, Kuhn, and Paul Feyerabend were resolved in and through the development of the *scientific tradition.*"[23]

But how is this tradition formed? MacIntyre claims that an

> …enquiry can only be systematic in its progress when its goal is to contribute to the construction of a *system* of thought and practice – including in the notion of construction such activities as those of more or less radical modification, and even partial demolition with a view to reconstruction – by participating in types of rational activity which have their *telos* in achieving for that system a perfected form in the light of the best standards for judging of that perfection so far to emerge.[24]

[19] TRVME, pp. 9-10.

[20] MacIntyre has also noted, in relation to the above claim, that progress in ethics was never made definitive "in the same way that Darwin and Clerk Maxwell had made the progress of biology and physics definitive" (TRVME, p. 29).

[21] TRVME, p. 29.

[22] see TRVME, p. 118.

[23] TRVME, p. 118 – emphasis added.

[24] TRVME, 149.

Tradition can hardly be formed without a conception of a structure which puts constraints on the way individual thinkers confront their specific problems and concerns. In short, progress is hardly attained without the conception of a whole to which all particular readings must take reference to. Castillo has noted this on the foreword of DK as he described Philosophy of Science studies:

> … encounters come in *wholes*, indistinguishable and confused. The wholes are later analysed into its parts and the whole is then pieced together gradually, part by part, back into its previous configuration. *The parts condition each other and can only be understood in terms of the whole.*[25] What was initially a collision and a mutual conditioning parts, reconfigures as a collusion in favour of a whole.[26]

Castillo's language of the *parts* and the *whole*, and the transition from the *collision* of parts to the *collusion* of the same parts to constitute the whole, is helpful in our attempt to understand the kind of scientific tradition that MacIntyre has credited as responsible for the progress of scientific enquiries. MacIntyre himself claims:

> It is instructive to compare the way in which such conflict within astronomy and also within natural philosophy functioned so as to produce ultimately a new tradition of enquiry in the physical sciences and the very different way in which conflict and disagreement within metaphysics and moral philosophy functioned. What emerge in the former, gradually and unevenly, but over time increasingly, are a set of *agreements*… By contrast, in what did fourteenth and fifteenth-century medieval moral philosophy and metaphysics issue? The answer is: as a whole, *nothing*.[27]

This reading has allowed MacIntyre to say that the task of delivering the Gifford lectures in the manner that is faithful to Gifford's wishes, 'to treat the subject as a strictly natural science,' is difficult to attain both in Gifford's time and in our own. It can only be possibly carried out if we will succeed in instituting a form of tradition

[25] The emphasis is mine. In his article, "Philosophy and Science Education: Towards Cross-Fertilization," he also speaks of the role of scientific paradigms and claims that a "paradigm stands for a kind of view which scientists position themselves in, with regard to their task and profession. It stands for the 'disciplinary matrix' which constitutes norms to guide the pursuit of their careers as scientists and guide them to the probing of the inner content of Nature, the starting points in the whole enterprise" (DK, p. 24). This allows us to see then that the scientist is one who is aware that his findings and pronouncement *still* need the validation of something external and objective. It seems that without the recognition of such objective external *nature*, we could hardly provide a venue for *correction* – something which will be instrumental, as to be pointed out later, in the conception of a progress in inquiry.

[26] DK, p. vii.

[27] TRVME, pp. 157-158 (emphasis is mine). This also brings to the fore the point that to build a tradition does not preclude the multiple claims of participants in a discourse. Both Castillo and MacIntyre agree that collisions (disagreements –even incommensurable disagreements) can become important prologues for collusion (consensus) [see DK, pp. 161-166]. To view a tradition – including a tradition in moral inquiry – as inimical to the freedom of particular readers of texts, actions or phenomena may not also be wholly accurate.

in moral enquiry in the same manner as progress in scientific inquiries was made possible by a scientific tradition. With this then, we attempt to understand the kind of scientific and moral traditions which MacIntyre has talked about, noting especially his claim that understanding such traditions is needed in order to achieve progress in moral enquiries. It becomes central to our task here to articulate 'that' tradition in scientific and moral enquiries. MacIntyre's text, especially in TRVME, has ventured into elucidating what he thought is needed in articulating a kind of a moral tradition,[28] but he has not been too specific about the tradition that has developed in the world of natural sciences. It is this latter task that leads us to this Filipino Dominican, Norberto Castillo, OP, whose works were mostly devoted to the reading of the history and philosophy of science.

Describing the scientific tradition

Castillo himself has noted that his love for *Philosophy of Science* has personal roots. He claims that his profession and work as a licensed chemist before his entry to the Dominican Order has propelled his interest in the discipline when he began his initiation in philosophy and theology – which was at the core of his Dominican formation towards the priesthood.[29] But, he is also quite clear and emphatic about the *Philosophy of Science* that he articulates, teaches and writes on. "If it was to be the Philosophy of Science, it had to be true to what it meant to be. It had to be *Veritas* all the way."[30]

We have here then a reiteration of what has already been said above. Castillo's Philosophy of Science is not alien to the basic questions of moral philosophy: questions about the good and the truth. He even explains that the title of his work, *The Desire to Know*, is meant to showcase his conviction that "it is desirable for each thing to be united to its source where perfection lies. Perfection does not end in simple interiority of the personal form, but diffuses and reaches out to the very source of perfection. The implications on the simple act of knowing and understanding are groundbreaking on the personal vocation of the spirit of man."[31] These claims provide us a glimpse on the person responsible for the text I am now reading.

The author of *The Desire to Know* makes the effort of including in the collection those articles that dealt with science. He confesses that "experiments may not have been mentioned specifically by any of the articles, but… the inspiration emanating from such source was always behind the pen."[32] As a work on science and

[28] MacIntyre is inviting us to view philosophy – moral philosophy in particular – as a species of craft-tradition (see TRVME, p. 63 & p. 128).

[29] see DK, p. ix.

[30] DK, p. ix.

[31] DK, p. viii.

[32] DK, p. xi.

on the undertaking of the scientists, it provides us some resources for our attempt to articulate what MacIntyre has termed as 'the scientific tradition' that was also responsible for the progress of scientific enquiries.

What we take to be a description of the scientific tradition may perhaps be summarily described by Castillo's three phases of the creative act: envisioning, invisioning and convisioning.[33] Envisioning is the initial encounter between the scientist and the subject of the study, and "it occurs in a scenario of blindness and darkness;"[34] invisioning is the phase where "a level of direction and *connection* begins to form;"[35] and convisioning happens when "a scientific discovery is formalized according to the requirement of consensus."[36] For our purposes in this article, we will borrow these phases to provide a structure for the articulation of the scientific tradition provided in Castillo's text.

Envisioning. Castillo has been emphatic about the need to distinguish the discovery from the process of discovering.[37] He argues for the importance of making this distinction because the 'discovery' serves as "a success-referent" from which the attempt to understand the 'process of discovering' may take a backward direction. He speaks of the "that" (the product which introduces the scientist into the community of scientists) and "why" (the reason the scientist's discovery is accepted as a novelty or progress in science) in scientific discoveries;[38] and perhaps we could also be allowed to make the distinction between the "that" (discovery) and the "how" (discovering) of scientific discovery.

What is important in Castillo's insistence of this distinction is the fact that this helps us approximate the *process* which is oftentimes concealed in the finished product. The distinction allows us to see the 'ups and downs' that the scientist had to go through, including the pains of failures. Castillo himself said that "the final construct which is published and made public hardly manifests any trace of the "wounds," the injuries and the humiliating or humbling experience undergone."[39] At the same time, a look at the process allows us to appreciate – and hopefully inspire us too to imitate – the virtues that the scientist had to go through. Virtues like tenacity and patience,[40] and humility.[41] Castillo's discussion is replete with names of those

[33] Two of his articles in *The Desire To Know* offer a page-length description of these phases: "The Creative Act in Scientific Discoveries" (DK, pp. 77-90; see p. 85), and "On Scanning Scientific Discovering: Plastic Control, Substitutionality and the Bootstrap Problematic" (DK, pp. 115-196, see p. 157).

[34] DK, p. 157.

[35] DK, p. 157 – emphasis added.

[36] DK, p. 85.

[37] see DK, p. 82.

[38] see DK, pp. 83-84.

[39] DK, p. 55.

[40] see DK, 184-185.

[41] see DK, 54.

scientists who have gone through the process and have exhibited these traits: Kepler, Einstein and Newton are among his favorite examples.

Moreover, Castillo has emphasized that the scientific discovery is *a discovery*. It is hardly an invention that is imposed on nature. Castillo reminds us that "Science is like a dialogic discourse between the projections of nature as witnessed by the scientist as spectator on the one hand and the response of the scientist as actor on the other. Nature leads the scientist to its secrets, the Solomon's mines so to say, as the scientist like Sheba brings his most precious gift, his gift of self."[42]

In other words, Castillo allows us to see that there is no scientific tradition without the brave souls who embraced the blindness and darkness of the envisioning phase only to emerge victorious after several episodes of defeat. There is no scientific tradition if there were no people who took to themselves the task of encountering nature; people of a "rare breed"[43] who embrace that role of a spectator and actor responding to the nature's summon to herself.

Invisioning. Castillo informs us that the invisioning phase "is a marked improvement over the mere sorting out and reviewing of events. It begins to see "in," and begins to rest "in" some of the details … but attention is *beginning to grow* in terms of reaction time and reflexivity. A level of *direction* and *connection* begins to form."[44]

Castillo affirms that discovery (especially scientific discovery) is a "process of ordering facts and results."[45] The act of ordering in science however must resist the anthropocentric tendencies of imposing one's will on nature. A scientist's creativity is always within the bounds of his capacity to discern. Scientific objectivity obviously does not mean the dissolution of the subject. Castillo in fact affirms the important role that the subject's experience plays in scientific discovery, where the faculties of the subject "play the role of a 'selection committee' for the agreeable."[46] But, he also contends that experience merely guides and does not impose.[47] "Understanding nature means the explicitation of the *connections* which reflected the intrinsic operation of nature which is thus reducible to a common principle."[48] Such understanding is hinged on an "emergent reality" that is 'independent of what the scientist may want otherwise.'[49]

The invisioning phase then allows us to see the complementary roles of the object and the subject. It is an improvement to the mere sorting and reviewing of

[42] DK, p. 79.
[43] DK, 59.
[44] DK, p. 85 – emphasis added.
[45] DK, p. 58.
[46] DK, p. 61.
[47] see DK, p. 61.
[48] DK, p. 63.
[49] see DK, p. 85.

events but it does not depart from the fundamental relationship between nature and the scientist where nature leads and the scientist offers himself as a gift. Scientific discoveries are objective but they do not deny the unique obsessions of the scientist.[50] The scientific truth is in fact here viewed as "correspondence between the reacting subject and the reactivated object."[51]

Convisioning. Perhaps, the most important element of the convisioning phase is the search for a consensus. The scientific discovery is yet to be completed if it does not have the recognition of the community of scientists. Such canonicity is important for the 'universal enthronement' of a discovery. When canonicity is declared, this means that a "kind of juridical sentence have been meted on a scientific discovery by the recognized and proper bodies that such scientific work merits a universal sceptre of acquired authority."[52] Curiously, the recognition of the product (scientific discovery) also provides recognition for the scientist. It legitimizes his future works and provides him a credible voice within the scientific community.

Castillo argues that "science as a rational enterprise is indeed a social and public responsibility. It is a communal resource for belief and action."[53] He also added that previous theories affect to a very large measure the mental and social dispositions of succeeding scientists; and a "scientific meaning is a product of a flux of both told and untold transformations. It is a continuing epistemic process of both the deliberate and unconscious inputs. It is a *communing* activity in *context.*"[54]

The last quotation is perhaps one of the most direct links between Castillo's description of scientific endeavours and the life of those scientists who are part of the scientific tradition that MacIntyre speaks of – the tradition that makes progress possible within the scientific community. It is perhaps this concept of a "communing activity in context" that science has managed to maintain throughout its history but moral philosophy has failed to do - as seen in MacIntyre's critique against the encyclopaedist (that has the tendency to ignore the context), and the genealogist (that has the tendency to go blind towards the rationality of traditions that can become important resources of our communities) versions of moral enquiry.[55]

So, we then reiterate the important concepts that we retrieve from Castillo's text when we provided the above attempt to characterize the scientific tradition. Castillo has reminded us first that the discovering process has its own story to tell,

[50] see DK, p. 159. For more discussions, please cf. "Unique Obsessions: Behind Scientific Discoveries," in DK, pp. 91-113.

[51] DK, p. 206.

[52] DK, 117.

[53] DK, p. 223.

[54] DK, 225.

[55] For a detailed critique of these traditions, please consult TRVME particularly chapters VIII and IX (pp. 170-215).

and they are worth our attention especially because most pedagogies of science "are presented in bookkeeping style, and the factive qualities which ignited and sustained the emergence of the product as a human enterprise to which a scientific pursuit is rooted, to the heights of heroism and superhuman bullheadedness, are sucked into an incongruous anonymity in the finished canonical product."[56] We need to be reminded that science has evolved because of the tenacity of those people who endeavoured to heed nature's invitation to discover her secrets through the offering of the scientist's gift of self. Such offering requires that the scientist has to embrace the rigors of forming oneself, which demands that s/he must embrace a life of virtue, especially the intellectual virtues. Secondly, we are also reminded by Castillo that a scientific discovery is both objective and subjective. It finds its strength in its reliance on the unfolding of nature which allows the scientist to do self-critique and thereby even correct himself/herself. But as it secures its foundation in nature, it does not obliterate the self of the subject into oblivion. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, we are reminded by Castillo that the so-called truths of science are established not by any isolated scientist, but by a scientist who is conscious and aware of – and in fact even thankful to –his being a member of a community. It is the communal discourse among scientists that has made progress in science possible.

Castillo even retorts, and it is rather important to take note of this, that the communal dimension of a scientific discovery goes beyond the elitist system of accrediting only those who speak the same jargons and language, and is therefore reserved only for those who qualify as 'peers' within scientific circles. He claims that the scientific tradition "goes beyond the currents of an immediate and contemporary peer influence… In either substance or style, or both, the history of science points to a distilled 'atmosphere' of the mind which refers to the long established shared 'ethos' of the indefiniteness of the scientific task… This atmospheric-like tradition rejects the facile inertia of self-sufficiency and fixations which are antithetical to the very nature of science itself and to the truthfulness of being *scientific*."[57] This type of consensus, the one that is beyond the partisanship prevalent in the stances of many communitarians, is perhaps the kind of agreement that MacIntyre is looking for when he begins harping for the need to found a tradition in moral enquiry.

Proposing a tradition of moral enquiry

If we hold the thesis that 'a tradition is needed in order to sustain progress in a particular enquiry,'[58] then sustaining progress in moral enquiry also implies the need to nurture 'a tradition.' We have already noted above that MacIntyre finds this lacking

[56] DK, 145.
[57] DK, p. 207.
[58] Cf. TRVME, p. 118.

in contemporary moral enquiry, which are susceptible to incommensurable and untranslatable disagreements.[59] MacIntyre argues that the failure of contemporary systems of moral enquiry is precisely brought by any of two extremes. First, there is a denial of the incommensurable differences which rests on the illusion that we still have a common conception[60] of what is moral or not, even if such agreement is clouded by the differences of our cultural expressions. This version of moral enquiry is tempted to argue that if only we could manage to overcome the 'taint' of the particularity of our culture, then we could arrive at a universal conception of a reasonable and good action. For MacIntyre, this is precisely the mistake of the encyclopaedists. The other extreme is the positing of the politics of difference as the only viable and just future of our moral reflection. This version argues that any attempt for a universal articulation is but a masqueraded attempt to impose one's will. The desire for a universal language of ethics (which was thought as the guarantee for agreements) is at best naïve and at worst unjust.[61]

MacIntyre however does not say that the conception of a tradition is fundamentally alien to moral enquiry. In fact, he says that such conception of a tradition in moral enquiry can be discerned in its history from Socrates to Aquinas. If not because of the wrong turns that the post-Aquinas thinkers like Scotus had taken, perhaps progress would have been true also in moral enquiry.[62] Aquinas was taken by MacIntyre as among the last brave souls to have endeavoured for the furthering of a tradition in moral enquiry,[63] a tradition that has been increasingly defeated after him due primarily to the neglect of moral thinkers themselves. MacIntyre even blames the rise of moral philosophy as a separate academic discipline as one of the major culprits for such defeat.[64]

[59] MacIntyre explains that while these incommensurabilities are denied by some, it is in fact healthier to recognize them and to utilize them as prologues for our dialogue (see TRVME, p. 5).

[60] The McWilliams attribute this view to the proponents of pluralist ethics which they said to have committed themselves only to few basic tenable principles of ethics: toleration and civic peace. For pluralist ethicists, there is no real disagreement in moral matters because all moral systems are committed to this ideal of non-violence and peace [see Wilson Carey McWilliams and Susan Jane McWilliams, "Pluralism and the Education of the Spirit," in *Debating Moral Education*: *Rethinking the Role of Modern University*, eds. Elizabeth Kiss and J. Peter Euben (London: Duke University Press, 2010). p. 132]. For pluralists, those that deny these principles are nothing but inauthentic moral traditions.

[61] Cf. TRVME, p. 42.

[62] See TRVME, pp. 152ff.

[63] See TRVME, p. 150.

[64] MacIntyre has argued that the emergence of philosophy, moral philosophy in particular, as a separate academic discipline contributes to the loss of a sense of direction. He argues that "the unity of inquiry, so crucial not only to Aquinas but also to both his Franciscan and Averroist contemporaries, gradually becomes lost to view" (TRVME, p. 161). This also allows him to comment that "the inability of twentieth-century Gifford lecturers to make discernible progress in the enquiries with which Adam Gifford entrusted them was rooted in part in the resourcelessness of this type of academic philosophy" (TRVME, p. 160).

It has become the self-designed task of MacIntyre to recapture an appreciation for a tradition, and to hinge contemporary moral reflection on it so that the latter could move forward. For MacIntyre, it is the birth of a tradition in moral enquiry that could make the implementation of Gifford's will for the lectures possible. But how would this tradition of moral enquiry look like? MacIntyre likens it to the craft-tradition of the Middle Ages so much so that he even calls the philosopher as the master-craftsman. If a tradition in moral enquiry is to be born, then we have to think of moral inquiry as a craft.[65]

Recalling the above-mentioned traits of the scientific tradition articulated by Castillo, we hope to paint a picture here of a tradition in moral enquiry. I propose that such tradition must maintain a very important trait, that is, it must provide the resources for both moral philosophers to grow as theoreticians of moral principles, and particular moral agents to mature as practical reasoners. But how are we to provide these resources? First, by providing opportunities for continuous learning in moral matters through the *cultivation of the virtues and dispositions* essential for moral and practical reasoning, and second, by providing the sufficient *space and means for open and fruitful conversations* within our communities. Castillo's three phases of scientific enquiry (envisioning, invisioning, and convisioning) may then be borrowed here to articulate this point a little further.

Envisioning in moral enquiry. Castillo has informed us that a scientific tradition could not become possible without those scientists who are willing to be trained to encounter nature, and who realizes that nature is inviting them to offer themselves as a gift, both as spectators and actors.[66] If we are to translate this into a tradition of moral enquiry, it suggests that both the moral philosopher and the individual moral agent have to be rooted in the data of their moral reflections. It is this *rootedness* in the data that must propel moral enquiries. This is perhaps the reason MacIntyre himself has resisted the encyclopaedist version of moral enquiry which takes inspiration from thinkers like Kant whose philosophy has engendered the thinking that there are universal codes and norms that can be applied to all people.[67] These encyclopaedists think that moral enquiry has to consist primarily in the discernment of universal moral codes where deviancies from these established codes are apt to mean offense against morality. Envisioning in moral enquiry however requires two things: 1) a sufficient amount of attention on the circumstances surrounding the moral act, and

[65] See TRVME, p. 63 & p. 128. In a recent lecture at the University of Santo Tomas (Manila, Philippines), "Theology Week 2016: Building the Church the Dominican Way," on February 9-11, 2016, Michael Sherwin, O.P. (Chair of Moral Philosophy in Fribourg University, Switzerland), speaks of an analogy of moral life with art and athletics. Sherwin has emphasized the need for initiation and apprenticeship in the areas of art and athletics. These two are also important in what MacIntyre calls as craft-tradition, as they are also important in moral enquiry and moral life.

[66] See DK, p. 79.

[67] See TRVME, pp. 176-177.

2) an admission of the need to form the agent to become a particular type of moral actor and reasoner. The first reminds us that moral codes are hardly rational if they are taken out of their context.[68] Codes are meant to define certain actions in order to build some forms of relationships in the community. Deprive those codes of their context then they also cease to become rational. The second requirement is also meant to remind us that moral perceptions have to be anchored on certain standards if we are to hope for progress towards the maturity of particular moral agents[69] and for the theoretical acceptance of moral principles. This anchoring is achieved when we accept that there is an ideal behaviour of a moral agent and there are also corresponding first principles that ground the enquiries of a moral philosopher.

Moreover, Castillo has informed us that in the envisioning phase of a scientific discovery, it is important to take note of the 'process' (discovering) as distinct from the product (discovery). We could perhaps learn to do the same in our moral reflections. There is a need to listen to the particular stories of moral agents; and moral theoreticians need to pay attention to their own humanity and that of others in order to understand the datum for the theory that they are to build. Moral enquiries then could not, and should not, ignore the stories of human persons, their successes and failures, their tendencies and inclinations, their preferences, their desires, and the processes through which these desires are formed, vis-à-vis their understanding of their nature as human persons. A tradition in moral enquiry hardly starts with the pre-established set of rules and norms that command unconditional obedience. It has to start from the circumstances of the moral agents whose lives and predicaments are the data for moral reflection, and it can only be sustained by agents and enquirers who have also succeeded in forming themselves as specific kind of persons.

Invisioning in moral enquiry. If invisioning in scientific discoveries is about the discernment of patterns and connections, the same discernment is also vital in moral enquiry. MacIntyre himself placed a central role for *phronesis* in moral enquiry arguing that the virtue is needed in the discernment of the appropriate application of rules in particular circumstances.[70] When I speak of invisioning in moral enquiry,

[68] MacIntyre often mentions the concept of *taboo* as one example of a moral concept taken out from its original context - which was to build particular forms of relationship in the community through some forms of prohibition. Taboos, MacIntyre contends, in their original contexts are not mere prohibitions. They are meant to construct certain forms of positive relationships. When taboos were taken out of their contexts, they were taken to mean exclusively as mere negative prohibitions (see TRVME, pp. 27-28).

[69] MacIntyre, for example, contends that the *Summa Theologiae* can only be read productively by a certain kind of individual. This then suggests that building a tradition of moral enquiry also requires that *we form ourselves to become a particular type of person* (equipped with particular sets of virtues) if we are to productively read the *Summa* as a text (see TRVME, p. 130).

[70] See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1988), p. 119.

I have in mind Castillo's invitation when he says that it should be a process of seeing "in" and resting "in" nature.[71]

Invisioning in moral enquiry is important in countering the contemporary tendency to reduce ethical reflection to a mere political exercise of lobbying the interests of individuals and groups. In moral enquiry, there has to be a sustained effort to look into the datum, that is, the circumstances and *nature* of the moral agent – the human person. Invisioning is the process of trying to understand the patterns in the data of human experiences. It has to approximate an answer to the question: who is the human person, and how are we to understand the human person as a moral agent? Invisioning in moral enquiry then affirms that ethical enquiry has to be attentive to the principles of metaphysics. Contra Nietzsche, we may instead say that without this process of invisioning, that is, without any allowance for metaphysics, moral enquiry will even in fact remain to be a mere assertion of the will to power.[72]

Building a tradition in moral enquiry then means that we have to resist the temptation of limiting our conversations about the human good solely within the arena of politics. The question about the good could not just be reduced to the questions of particular interests of individuals and groups, and must therefore accommodate the more arduous task of metaphysics: to persevere in the reflection about the nature of the human person. Disagreements and dilemmas are real but they could not be forever irresolvable.[73] The task to discover human nature provides us reasons to hope for rational agreements in moral matters. Aquinas affirms that moral enquirers may *vary* in their understanding of the details about the moral quality of actions, that is, on conclusions of the generally agreed 'general precepts of natural law,' but such differences can be resolved precisely by an appeal to the authority of these general principles.[74] Invisioning in moral matters shall therefore be a process of looking into the data in order to 'see' the elements of metaphysics and allow them to ground the enquiries of moral philosophers and the formation of particular moral agents.

Convisioning in moral enquiry. Lastly, Castillo informs us that the completion of a scientific discovery happens only when it has successfully secured a consensus

[71] DK, p. 85.

[72] We could even ask the question on whether such absence of metaphysics in Nietzsche's genealogical project is one of the reasons MacIntyre had to claim that "the history of genealogy has been, and could not have been other than, one of progressive impoverishment" (TRVME, p. 55).

[73] MacIntyre also affirms that "[f]or Aquinas in allowing that one can be *perplexus secundum quid* does recognize that one may seem to oneself to be in an irresolvable dilemma, to be *perplexus simpliciter*. What one always has to remind oneself is that this cannot really be so; what one must be is *perplexus secundum quid*, perplexed indeed but only relative to some factor, identification of which will be the key to resolving the dilemma" [Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 99].

[74] cf. ST I-II, q. 94, a. 6.

in the scientific community. In a sense, it is the community that becomes the arbiter and judge with regard to the quality and relevance of a discovery. Only when the community declares a discovery canonical will such discovery be finally recognized. It is moreover important to recall here Castillo's clarification about the nature of this consensus. It is an agreement that moves beyond the affirmation of peers. It is a consensus that stretches out through historical time. In a sense, the canonicity of the scientific discovery is temporary, that is, it lasts until the time that it self-destructs,[75] that is, until it ceases to earn the approval of the community.

Convisioning in moral enquiry will therefore remind us about the historical character of our moral truths. Moral truths, as historical, may not be fully comprehended in an instant. Moral truths are products of communal discernment, and are formulated at certain points in history. The emphasis on the historical component of moral truths can be affirmed both in the Thomistic and genealogic traditions.[76] But, the emphasis on consensus counters the communitarian tendency to restrict the rationality of moral principles to the standards and practices of particular communities in which the moral agent has been raised and habituated.[77]

The convisioning phase in moral enquiry then allows us to see that our appreciation of moral truths develop in time.[78] It should not be difficult to find examples of this in history: women's rights especially for suffrage, the abolition of slavery, the citizenship status of the black people both in America and in South Africa, the recognition of the rights and dignity of the indios in the colonized lands of Asia and South America, etc. The convisioning phase is an important component of moral inquiry, even if historically, this was mostly done through several forms of struggles.

The convisioning phase is especially relevant if we are to look into the contemporary discussions about rights. We certainly have several important discussions on rights that await the consensus of the community, and it is precisely this problem that MacIntyre had to talk about when he devoted his major works in discussing the extent of our differences and disagreements. Yet, if convisioning is an important signifier for the presence of a tradition, why is it that despite the presence of several venues for discussion, and even the increasing political consensus over

[75] See DK, p. 85.

[76] We, however, have to note here the differences between these two traditions. It can even be safely argued that Foucault's insights on this matter are outside the tradition that both MacIntyre and Castillo have in mind. Foucault's genealogy that features his emphasis on the historicity of moral truths is negligent at least of the import of the metaphysical aspect conditioned by the invisioning phase in moral enquiry. For MacIntyre's discussion (and critique) of Foucault's project, please see TRVME, pp. 49ff.

[77] See McWilliams and McWilliams, "Pluralism and the Education of the Spirit," p. 132.

[78] This was the conclusion that Kellison reached when she said that "we cannot adequately understand moral norms and practices without understanding the historical processes by which they came to be" [see Rosemary Kellison, "Tradition, Authority, And Immanent Critique in Comparative Ethics," in *Journal of Religious Ethics* 42/4 (2014), p. 736].

certain issues,[79] MacIntyre still insists on saying that we do not have the tradition in moral enquiry which could facilitate its progress? Castillo's distinction between authentic consensus and the partisan influences of peers could be helpful here. Most of our conversations can be reduced to instances of lobbying personal or group interests, and are not really the kind of convisioning phase that seals the recognition of discovery in a scientific tradition.[80] If I may say, the lack of metaphysics in most of contemporary discussions – the requisite stage of invisioning – makes these conversations fall short of being classified as a proper convisioning phase within a tradition of moral enquiry.[81]

It is perhaps important to recall here that in science, conversations are rendered fruitful – that is, they arrive at a consensus, according to Castillo, because they are products of a healthy balance of the envisioning and invisioning stages. What makes contemporary moral debates sterile is the neglect either of the phases of envisioning (as the encyclopaedists are prone to do) or invisioning (which most genealogists do). We appear to be conversing over many moral matters but our conversations are but false pretenses because they do not really build from a completed envisioning and invisioning phases (the convisioning stage has become a mere appearance and is never reached). What we need are authentic debates on moral matters. But our debates could hardly become authentic, at least in Castillo and MacIntyrean terms, if we do not take into account the necessity of a common framework for debates,

[79] We note here, for example, of the increasing consensus among cultures on the toleration of and even support for gay rights, particularly their demand for the recognition of their rights for legal marriage.

[80] While it is true that historical struggles for rights must help us 'correct' ourselves through the expansion of our hitherto limited understanding of the circumstances of individuals and groups, we should not also be led into thinking that all forms of interests demanded, even those demanded in the public sphere, are always morally warranted.

[81] This would also help us see that not all struggles for a 'right' may readily be recognized. Following this thought, we will see that not all 'rights' demanded by individuals and groups – even those demanded through struggles – may necessarily be legitimated as rights. A reviewer of this article has affirmed the difficulty in moral convisioning. He noted that "scientific enquiry is based on 'hard facts,' that is, on the nature of the physical world; while moral enquiry is based on 'soft facts,' that is, the circumstances and predicaments of moral agents. In science, agreement among investigators is possible because they deal with 'hard facts,' but in ethics, this consensus is almost impossible given that they deal with 'soft facts.'" This point, however, only affirms this paper's insistence on metaphysics as basis for ethics. If we are to simply ground ethics on politics, then consensus really becomes difficult. It is only in grounding ethics on metaphysics that moral convisioning can hopefully be achieved. This is the kind of consensus that MacIntyre hopes to see in the development of a 'tradition in moral enquiry.' *Moreover, we have arguments like those forwarded by Rachel Lu in her essay, "The Collapse of Gender Sanity," Crisis Magazine (March 08, 2016) available at <http://www.crisismagazine.com/2016/the-collapse-of-gender-sanity>. Lu laments on the collapse of objective standards on 'gender talks,' which has serious implications on moral considerations of issues related to gender. She claims, "… American gender politics has reached freakish levels of absurdity. If there is any chance of returning to sanity, our understanding of gender will need to be rooted in reflections on something objective and measurable: the body" (emphasis mine). Arguments like this are grounds for our confidence on the possibility of moral convisioning, that is, to have some 'objective and metaphysical grounding' for moral enquiry that has for its data the 'soft facts.'*

that is, the ground laid down by metaphysics. This is why both the envisioning and invisioning phases are important. Our debates could not just settle on the level of our historical circumstances, desires and interests (even if they too are essential). They also have to proceed to questions related to our nature as human beings and moral agents. It seems that our contemporary debates do not just dislike these questions. Some moral philosophers have treated them as irrelevant and even harmful for our discussions.[82] It is perhaps this latter temperament that renders progress still wanting in our contemporary moral debates.

Conclusion

The above presentation, albeit in a rather initial and skeletal form, of a manner of instituting a tradition in moral inquiry has allowed an appreciation of Castillo's phases for a scientific enquiry as a helpful guide. As it was in a scientific tradition, so it would also be in a tradition of moral enquiry – we need to have the phases of envisioning, invisioning and convisioning in moral enquiry: 1) our moral enquiries have to be rooted in the data – the actual stories and circumstances of the moral agents who are subjects of our enquiries; 2) we need to root our discussions on metaphysical questions related to the nature and status of the human person as a moral agent; and 3) we need to create an atmosphere of authentic rational discourses where consensus over the truths established by the two previous stages are to be sought. Oftentimes, in our contemporary culture, we shortchange the process. We immediately jump into the formulation of a moral claim – mostly supported by our wishes, preferences and interests, and demand for consensus in the public arena.[83] Unless we would be willing to go through the pains of the envisioning and invisioning phases (carefully dealing

[82] We see this, for example, in the claims of those who wish to arrive at agreement without the prerequisite search for truth, and they substitute this metaphysical requirement with the political ideal of toleration. Roberto Frega (in "Rehabilitating Warranted Assertibility: Moral Inquiry and the Pragmatic Basis of Objectivity," *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 51/1 (2013), pp. 1-23], for example, claims that "[I]n a wide range of forms of moral and political inquiry, when what is at stake is not the establishment of a fact of the matter but rather the articulation of a valuational perspective, a non-exclusionary and pluralist search for pragmatic warranted assertibility should replace the assertoric intolerance of disagreement" (p. 21). The consequence of this, however, is the denial of truth-talk which is now treated as "an idle exercise in self-defense" (p. 21). For Frega, deliberations or debates have rather modest ends, "to find a solution that is viable, consistent, acceptable, fair, reasonable, but not necessarily true" (p. 21). Frega denies the possibility of realizing Gifford's invitation to treat moral questions as matters like natural sciences (see pp. 10 & 22). He explicitly says that "[t]o understand moral inquiry we must refrain from endorsing a conception of objectivity designed with particular forms of scientific inquiry in mind…" (p. 22).

[83] MacIntyre labels this as the practice of emotivism which he defines as the doctrine which claims that "all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character" (AV, p.12).

with the questions of politics and metaphysics), our conversations and debates over moral matters would remain sterile and will hardly progress.■

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