Cultural Difference and Social Solidarity

Solidarities and Social Function

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CHAPTER FOUR

SOLIDARITY THROUGH PRACTICE? MACINTYRE'S REVOLUTIONARY ARISTOTELIANISM: A MARXIST READING

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In this chapter I want to explore solidarity within the context of a particular problem in Marxist theory. How is a collective commitment to a communist (or an alternative shaped and influenced by Marxist thinking) society achieved? Or to put it another way, how do Marxists ensure solidarity in and for communist societies? If a utopian conception of communist societies is to be avoided, solidarity must involve a continuous process of moral, social and political re-making of the community in order to allow for emergent changes and differences, the persistence of democratic participation and politics and the moral and political commitment to a society where class divisions are broken down and reconstituted by a collectivist political economy typified in the theory of communism. If this claim is accepted, then it is the character and mechanisms of the continuous process of re-making that are critical to understand both how a politics of change is promulgated and a politics of communism is sustained. In exploring this question, a central assumption will be that both Marxism - an approach to understanding the world through a materialist and dialectical conception of history - and the problem of remaking are fruitfully explored and centrally constituted through the concept of *practice*. It is through a focus on and understanding of social, cultural, political and economic practices that solidarity is meaningfully produced and reproduced, and this solidarity becomes critical in any form of revolutionary politics and the communist politics that comes after.

This focus on the relationship between practices and making and re-making solidarity is one that might be pursued through a number of different strands of social and philosophical thought, but this short discussion will focus on one thinker who has gained contemporary attention as a significant source of fertile ideas in understanding the scope and limits to a radical and moral community - Alisdair MacIntyre.

MacIntyre's successive engagements with Marxism, Christianity and more recently a rearticulation of Aristotelian virtue ethics has produced what Knight (2007, 2011) has aptly termed 'Revolutionary Aristotelianian'. MacIntyre's pessimistic claims for communities bound by virtue are nevertheless useful in exploring the conditions, scope and limits of practices to make and remake solidarity in contemporary societies. This Marxist reading of MacIntyre will seek to provide a critical basis for understanding the construction of solidarity through practice for a communist politics.

Solidarity and Politics

If a general sense of the different framings of solidarity in political discourse is useful, three distinct form might be sketched:

- The metaphysically constituted solidarity - this is a solidarity that is rooted in a common metaphysical system of beliefs that gives a community or society their cohesion. Classically, any society with strong ideological and institutional religious forces, especially where they come together historically in monarchies, might be regarded as being held together by the power of that metaphysicality - in the Judaeo-Christian world, the Christian God. This sort of metaphysical roots to solidarity might be extended to teleological notions of how societies develop, such as the Hegelian *geist* that underpins the development of the democratic and constitutional state as a forward looking political development, or a notion of nature that gives the community a particular form of teleology.

- The collectivist materialist constituted solidarity - this is signposted by Marx's radical rejection of metaphysical forces shaping politics and society, and his focus on a material and historical analysis, focused on political economy as shaping the material conditions in which societies develop. Here, solidarity is formed directly in relation to the material distribution of wealth and power. Appeals to metaphysics, or to an inherent 'natural' character to substantive class inequality and dispossession in the social order are regarded as a political - hegemonic - attempt to secure solidarity as a means of maintaining the balance of wealth and power. Strategies for solidarity become an exercise of power and have to be retrieved through building a solidarity amongst the dispossessed - class solidarity - and theorising a radical

alternative where solidarity is built by common values and norms underpinned by common ownership and distributions of wealth and power. This collectivism is evident in other forms of radicalism, such as forms of feminism and anti-racist/imperialist politics

- The intersubjective constituted solidarity - this emerges with identity politics and post-modern critiques of the 'grand narratives' of modernity (see indicatively Seidman 2013). Solidarity is not constituted by a determinant relationship, whether metaphysic or material, but by the moral and political agency of particular subjects, whether they represent particular identities or intersectionalities of identity or interests. An intersubjectively constituted solidarity sees the nexus of social interrelations as being diverse in the constituencies that form common associations, the forms of association, the duration and occupation of space by these associations, and the different levels of subjective and common characteristics of association that represent the relationship. They are represented best by their fluidity, plasticity and diversity, in a continual state of contingent remaking.

Marxists clear belong to the rejection of metaphysically constituted solidarity in society, the exposure of forms of solidarity under capitalism as being hegemonic and class based strategies for domination and the continued appropriation of profit and capital, and a resistance to intersubjectivity as a form of diffusion of radical politics into relativistic, identarian concerns that fail to see the persistence of class power and the connections between different forms of oppression and exploitation as they are experienced in the form of interest and identity politics.

Framing the question of collectivist commitment as solidarity exposes a contradiction within the focus of Marxist theory, as the concept of solidarity is an *absent presence* in Marxist theory. The place where solidarity would be used is occupied by the concept of class in two senses: as an material analysis of society organised around the ownership and control of the means of production, which conceives common class positions arising from the social relations of production; and a more subjective political articulation of class politics in seeking to subvert, corrode, overthrow and restructure these social relations through appeals to class politics. Solidarity is effectively a *description* of the way and extent to which political subject organise to uncover and wage revolutionary politics on the existing material social relations under

capitalism based on common class consciousness and commitment within particular contexts and conjunctures. It describes what is necessary for the class subject to realise their revolutionary potential, and so a strategic goal and function of class politics, and a *characteristic* of classless society as it is theorised. Whilst there is considerably more to say about subject-material relations as a dialectical relationship central to Marxist analyses of capitalist societies, revolutionary politics and the transition of communism, this suffices to provide an explanation of the relative absence of solidarity as a *critical* concept in Marxist discourse. It is present in the goals, conduct and strategic engagement with class politics. Other than part of rhetorical flourishes, the conceptual constituency of the idea of solidarity is subsumed into class theory and politics.

For Marxists, where it is used in bourgeois theories, notably by Durkheim, it misrepresents and misdirects from the means and strategies by which capitalist societies organise cohesion through social organisation and ideological politics that diminish and obscure the centrality of class politics in constituting the subject around exploitative and alienating social relations of production. As such, even socialist routes of theories of solidarity are problematic because they tend to seek to maintain social cohesion and the functionality of some amended or reformed version of social organisation under capitalism, as opposed to recognising the need to forge a substantially different form of solidarity through class politics. Solidarity, in a Marxist account, becomes a *political* function rather than a *social* function, and the task of making and remaking solidarity is achieved through a heightened class consciousness and the organisation of social and material relations upon collectivist principles - a solidarity of the revolutionary to supplant the solidarity functions of social institutions in capitalist societies. For Marxists, there is no teleology or naturalised process by which solidarity evolves in society, and no necessary progress within the functionality of society - scientific, technological or otherwise - as 'bourgeois theory' would tend to assert. Such ideological apparatus detracts from the terms of an alternative collectivist society and the balance of commitment to solidarity and expressions of diffusion, difference or diversity such a society involves.

Conceptually, Marx's early works, notably the Paris Manuscripts (Marx 1964), provide sketches of a communist society in which work, leisure and communal commitments are organised for the benefit of the collective, for all to share in, as a contrast to capitalism's system of estranged labour, private property and an economic system driven by profit. Whilst not explicit, Marx's drawing out of the possibilities of an alternative are predicated on a common, Marxist understanding of the

failings of capitalism and a commitment to solidarity in a collectivist alternative That this is a utopian position, or one which counterpoints the real possibilities of socialist transformation through class agency in a developing capitalist economy, is a matter of dispute. As Geoghegan points out, the tendency for Marx to be regarded as against utopianism is partly a product of criticisms of 19th Century utopian socialism, and a strategic commitment to class politics with a scientific approach to what could be envisaged as emerging from class struggle in the mid-19th century (Geoghegan 1987, 22-34).

Marx is far more explicit about the importance of solidarity in the Communist Manifesto (Marx 1952), with its exhortation that worker of the world unite under the banner of Proletarian revolution. Yet thereafter, solidarity becomes largely subsumed within the debates around class struggle and class contradictions within capitalist economies. Subsequently, Marx's political writings, particularly on the class struggles in France and later the Paris Commune, chart the attempts and failings of political struggles to develop a class solidarity that followed the coda of the Manifesto (Marx 1971, 1974).

Solidarity, in both making class struggle and consciousness and envisaging post-capitalist alternatives, has been an enduring problem for Marxists. It is present in the organisational question of the relationship between party and class in Marxist politics (Lenin 1947, also see Lenin 1968 and Lih 2006). It is present in claims for an inherent organicism of class politics or the necessity of political strategies that build collective commitment (see Townsend 1996). It is present in the articulation of the ideological politics by which class hegemony is deconstructed and counter-hegemony articulated (Gramsci 2011, also see Thomas 2009). It is present in the possibilities for class strategies to mobilise mass protest and revolutionary activity, and more pessimistic claims that the 'structures of practice' in capitalist societies are so enduring and all-pervasive that class solidarity is impossible (Althusser 1977, 2001, Althusser and Balibar 1970, also see Elliott 2006). It is present in the possibilities of an enriched communicative solidarity focused on discourse ethics and universal pragmatics (selectively Habermas 1985, 1998b)

The revolutionary politics of Marxist influenced parties and organisations have historically been ceded to more authoritarian attempts to maintain solidarity by policing and disciplining strategies, as in the Soviet Union and China. In Bolshevik Russia, the Leninist revolution initially galvanised a wide constituency of support and solidarity amongst workers, and was undermined chiefly by the mobilisation of international opposition that energised internal resistance, and the pessimism of the

Bolshevik leadership that could not move beyond hijacking state apparatus to transform them to incorporate worker's democracy (for an accessible study see Haynes 2002).

In China, Mao's revolution sought to impress a distinctively Chinese communist solidarity by fundamentally restructuring social institutions and cultures, and was undermined by both the scale and authoritarian underpinning of those changes with estrangement from a larger global communist project (itself riven by authoritarian politics) (indicatively Karl 2010, Chan 2003 and Draguhn and Goodman 2002). In Cuba, isolation encouraged a siege mentality and authoritarian politics in defence of a revolution largely isolated by the effectiveness of US hegemony (Indicatively, Trento 2001, Guevara and Castro 2009).The degenerations of revolutionary promise to Stalinism and Maoism can be partly expressed as changing strategies of solidarity from a solidarity made and remade within collectivist struggle to a solidarity made and sustained by the evolving of policing and political organisations that emphasise conformity and cohesion based on ideological and elite power. Solidarity becomes, as with the bourgeois conception, naturalised within the social vision produced within the existing ideological and political power structures and hierarchies in society.

Throughout 20th century global politics, left solidarity has failed to adequately cohere a popular hegemony project before it has been undermined, whether from within or from without. Where there has been evidence of the inculcation of solidarity around left struggles and ideas, left organisations have been able to advance their political agendas and engage in governance, if not always with sustained success or without reinforcing the strategies for solidarity with a hegemonic project incorporating discipline and resistance to external interference. Examples of popular struggles exhibiting solidarity might be the solidarity movement and its successes in Poland, the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and Chavez's Venezuela. Marxists hold on to the promise of revolutionary change evidenced in particular periods of class and political struggles that have produced participative revolutionary parties and movements and created moments for democracy and social justice in particular contexts and conjunctures, no matter how brief or subsequently normalised these become.

Particularly against the context of a neo-liberal global enterprise that seeks primarily to privatise, atomise and individualise social life, solidarity has become a critical concept by which radical debates are organised. The conservatives and neo-liberals seek to construct forms of solidarity around a atomising and individuated commitment to the functionality of free

economy and the strong but limited liberal democratic state, global economic relations and a 'realism' in respect of the limits of democratic politics, particularly in transnational political and economic organisation, and, the global geo-politics of 'mature capitalist democracies', those states who 'play by the rules' and the dangerous 'other', and nationalist, ethnic and religious commitments. For centrist liberal democrat and social democrats, solidarity involves the making and remaking of a perceived balance of interests and identities within democratic politics and within the context of uneven development within global capitalism which requires national responses that secure economic solvency if not prosperity. Within radical politics, solidarity presents a twofold problem: how is solidarity achieved within the context of the radical politics of intersectionality, difference, diversity and deconstruction in identities and interests?; How is solidarity achieved as a counter-hegemony against the neo-liberal project?.

Solidarity for the left is, then, an elusive and complex political concept, with constitutive discourses of solidarity. If the left is said to consist of a range of political visions, from Marxist through Anarchist to Identiarian (feminist, anti-racist, disability and sexuality radicals) through to democrats and other forms of socialist, notions of solidarity are often variable in their spatial, temporal and contextual characterisations. Often, there is a tension between the subject politics of struggling for change and what politics are at the core of that particular left variant, so, for example, anarchists and Marxists can co-operate in supporting the global Occupy movement whilst having very different positions on its value, longevity and eventual impacts (indicatively Jackson 2012 and Wollff and Barsamian 2012). Likewise, left movements are diverse in their analysis of cultural, political and social pre-conditions for political engagement, forms of politics, cohering characteristics and discursive constitutions. Solidarity is often, therefore, somewhat temporary and focused on what can be agreed on, such as immediate campaigns or protests.

Yet at the same time solidarity is central to any attempt to theorise social cohesion within a community or society. It is of particular concern to all variants of the left, whose agendas stand or fall on the extent to which radical political and ideological change can be inculcated into a society that coheres - and is hegemonically cohered - around particular values, recognitions and redistributions of power, wealth and ownership. If left solidarity cannot be achieved, political struggle is diminished, the possibility of effecting change reduced or the moment of radical or revolutionary change deferred, defeated or corrupted by the need to defend its frailty through the use of discipline, coercion and the manufacture of consent.

It is clear that in this discussion solidarity is not simply a describable *characteristic* of a particular society, which might have lesser or greater solidarity according to the character and functions of its social, cultural and political institutions, organisations, structures, processes and group activity. Solidarity is both an *aim* of competing political interests who wish to create it around its own preferences for social and political structure, function and order, and a *feature* of the organisational, strategic, ideological, theoretical and practical means by which that aim is achieved. Solidarity is not just a state of *being* in society, a quality of cohesion or communality in society at a given time: it is a process –consensual but principally conflictual in different moments – by which cohesion and communality are made and remade and societies or communities *become* what the dominant amalgam of interests regard as a sustainable and desirable settlement of interests within the content of a claimed – hegemonic – common cause. It is a feature of political mobilisation, the effectiveness of counter-hegemonic strategy and the strength of movement to achieve change.

Moreover, solidarity is something that is normative, in that collective endeavour is something seen as desirable and intrinsically valuable to a society. Common factors in the different variants of left politics are a sense of collective welfare and political commitment, a greater distribution of both ownership and wealth of resources across society, a greater degree of participation and devolved power in governance and a sense that liberty, in a real sense, involves a recognition of the liberty of others and self-discipline and constraint in the liberty of all to achieve greater equality, justice and quality of life. All of these factors point to the necessity of solidarity as a normative quality in society, where the value of solidarity is in the character and achievement of these factors and the sense of living beyond the self and recognising others, strangers and differences.

Unless there is a supposition that societies cohere organically, without co-ordination or regardless of the exercise of unequal power in hierarchies within society, this political articulation of solidarity is central to the achievement of a society that exhibits social solidarity. It is therefore a political concept, suffused with power, the presence of opposition and/or alternative to any particular form or articulation it takes, and the challenge of strategising and constantly remaking solidarity as both an aim and as part of the means to that aim.

Solidarity: Thinking with MacIntyre

Alisdair MacIntyre's contribution to a radical rethinking of the prospects for solidarity arise from his attempts to explore the possibility of placing virtue at the core of a progressive politics of social and cultural change in contemporary societies. Or more specifically. it is his pessimistic rejection of such a possibility, and his formulation of how communities at the margins might seek to be virtuous in the context of a degenerate capitalist late modernity, that offers some possibilities to thinking further about solidarity. MacIntyre (1985,1988, 1998, 1999, 2006) develops his analysis from a standpoint of thinking rooted in both Marxism and Christianity, and a commitment to an Aristotelian notion of virtue and its centrality to a human life that has value and meaning.

In *After Virtue*, his most important work, MacIntyre (1985) proposes a damning analysis of the enlightenment project, moral agency and their impact on contemporary societies. The root of this analysis lies in the rejection of ancient (particularly Aristotelian) and early Christian and medieval moral presuppositions, which argued a central teleology to human experience, whereby in the course of developing and flourishing humanity, there was a teleological end characterised by the virtues that humans necessarily progressed towards. What philosophy after the Renaissance, and particularly enlightenment philosophy, did was to erode that teleology and formulate morality in a scientific form. Detached from its culture and context and formulated in forms of logic and rationality, where subjectivity and the logic of process replace the virtues of both a clear notion of the character of human species and the cultural traditions within which morals and values are formed. For MacIntyre, this reduces ethics to a language game rather than providing meaningful and contextually enriched bases for understanding and aspiring to human good. Subjectivity gets in the way of a shared moral commitment to a common understanding of flourishing and human endeavour, and the absence of clear moral values for guidance leads to endless contestation or a celebration of the absence of moral certainties. Moral questions become questions engaged with by individuals who seek to make sense of their moral agency through their subjective response to the range of value positions placed in front of them, if they do not simply conform to dominant values in the absence of meaningful collective engagements with questions of moral values. The individuating function of the market, the capitalist valoration of property, accumulation and wealth and the promotion of sectional interests over common values all speak to struggles to establish moral agency on an individual basis in a society suffused with institutional and organisational process that mitigate against moral agency as a collective enterprise.

MacIntyre sees the roots of moral conduct in three presuppositions. First, that they have to be collectively developed and not individually reasoned. Second, that there has to be a clear understanding of what moral conduct is and to what end it serves, from which MacIntyre is drawn to Aristotelianism and the constitution of virtues. Finally, any notion of humanity has to account for people as they are and not as they might be ideally understood to be or aspired to be in terms of their development.

Central to this conception of moral conduct are two concepts - practices and traditions1. For MacIntyre (1985), drawing from Aristotle, moral conduct is always practiced. It is in the practicing of the 'craft' of moral conduct that moral conduct is learned. It does not come from recognising abstract principles and debating them within particular institutions such as deliberative governmental forums or academies. It is about practicing moral conduct as a means of living that conduct and having it embodied as part of every activity within a community. Both the character of what is done and the way things are done are as, if not more, important than what is produced. It is practicing that makes for a virtuous society, and so it is the quality of practices that are central to establishing virtue. For Aristotle (1999):

> Virtue..we acquire, just as we acquire crafts, by having first activated them. For we learn a craft by producing the same product that we must produce when we have learned it (19)

> ....for actions in accord to the virtues to be done temperately or justly it does not suffice that they are they themselves have the right qualities. Rather, the agent must also be in the right state of mind when he does them. First, he must know (that he is doing virtuous actions); second, he mist decide on them, and decide on them for themselves; and third, he must also do them with a firm and unchanging state........

> It is right, then, to say that a person comes to be just from doing just actions and temperate from doing temperate actions; for no one has the least prospect of becoming good without failing to do them.
>
> The many, however, do not do these actions. They take refuge in arguments, thinking that they are doing philosophy,

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1 The accounts of practices and traditions here will not dwell on what MacInjtyre distinguishes as practices, nor what the different traditions are. For the purpose of this chapter what is more important is an outline of how practices and traditions give form to MacIntyre's understanding of the possibility of virtue in community.

> and that this is the way to become excellent people. They are
> like a sick person who listens attentively to the doctor, but acts
> on none of his instructions..... (22)

Practices are central to this Aristotelian conception of what is good, where the exercise of practical rationality and virtue in everyday practices are central to lives lived that flourish (*Eudiamonia*) in excellence (*arete*). Practices provide the means by which the performance of excellence us learned and evidenced, whether these practices are contemplative in philosophy or, for example associative in political engagement. Yet these practices are not acquired or learned or accumulated randomly. MacIntyre (1988:12) recognises they develop within traditions:

> A tradition is an argument extended through time in which
> certain fundamental agreements and disagreements are defined
> or redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: with critics and
> enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key
> parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal,
> interpretative debates through which the meaning and rationale
> of fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by who
> progress a tradition is constituted.

Traditions provide the cultural and historical context through which moral conduct and the values and virtues that inform it are developed. They give the virtues and values to be learned and practiced a sense of tangibility in the context of community in which they are made. MacIntyre recognises how practices emerge from traditions in such a way as to produce a narrative order to human life in this learning, which provides a meaningful sense of engaging with a conception of flourishing that emerges from tradition, its embodiment within practice and a subject-centred domain for practice that puts the subject at the centre of considerations of virtuous life, and not transcendental speculations.

Following from Aristotle, MacIntyre's virtue is a product of practices and working within and appreciating the cultural traditions within which the collective developed. It is precisely the learning and performing of practices that embodies and instantiates virtue within the community. As MacIntyre observes (2007:187):

> 'any coherent and complex form of socially established
> cooperative human activity through which goods internal to
> that form of activity are realised 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

What MacIntyre provides, then, is a sense of the way a moral community can be concretely constructed through a recognition of traditions and practices at the centre of how virtue is instantiated. It provides a vivid contrast with a society where social practices under modernity are suborned to commodification as central to entering the cultural world, capitalism and the reification of science and technological development and their assumed prospects for human enhancement. MacIntyre's response to the challenge of what he regards as a fundamentally amoral modern world was to claim that the means by which a more virtuous life might be encouraged were absent in modernity itself, but possible for communities on the margins of modernity. He saw these as small and cohesive communities that were able to engaged in a degree of boundary-setting in respect of the values and processes that constituted modern societies.

Knight's (2011) seminal essay *Revolutionary Aristotelianism* emphasises the radical potential of MacIntyre's conception of virtue in practice by placing practices in contrast to institutions. It is when practices become instantiated beyond their performance and into institutions with managerial and bureaucratic processes that they become atrophied and barren in their morality. Hence it is not simply that a focus on practices appears to encourage associations that are most typical of marginal communities - communes for example. It is that the transformation of practices beyond their immediate instantiation, and into institutions, necessarily produces processes that are antithetical to practices continuing to be infused by virtue. Hence MacIntyre's conclusion that late modernity has little to offer as a basis for a re-moralisation of community and society. Yet Knight (2010: 32) recognises that there is radical potential for this otherwise pessimistic conclusion

> ....the bases of these certain forms of community are to be
> found no longer in locality, but rather in particular
> practices....the task for a politics of the Aristotelian
> tradition are to defend the rationality, ideals creativity, and
> cooperative care for common goods of practices against
> institutional corruption and managerial manipulation, and
> to uphold internal goods of excellence against external
> goods and claims of effectiveness. The present dominance
> of institutions over practices, and of bureaucratic technique
> and procedural rules over practical wisdom, is the

> embodiment of the dominance of abstract reason and will over tradition.......It is collective defence of the goods and rationalities against those of institutions that the bases for a politics in the Aristotelian tradition are now to be found.

For MacIntyre, it is the everyday practice of virtuous behaviour, and its meaningfulness to the community, its practice within the community and its careful engagement with tradition that literally embody virtue. Rather than a language game or an ideal or aspiration, virtue is practiced and reflected on. This practice and reflection is achieved as part of being in the community. Whilst this practice may take a variety of forms, MacIntyre thinks it important that this practice is understood as applying practical rationality (*phronesis*) and involves a contemplative moment whereby the practices of the community involve a conscious engagement with questions of moral values and how practices conform to what the community believes is the point of being in the community and living a good life.

This is a not a stagnant community, with a singular sense of having one tradition of moral values and one articulation of virtue, although one may take primacy. There is a plurality of traditions both within communities and between different communities. Likewise, this is not a simply appeal to a form of communitarianism such as that of Etzioni (1993, 1996), as MacIntyre is quite specific about how community is formed around the practice of virtues rather than a particular geographical population, resource of social capital or particular interests and identities. Instead, in MacIntyre, there is a sense that the question of how the community works to promote virtuous lives is more important than its status as a viable civil space between state political management and individuated market relations.

What MacIntyre offers to thinkers about solidarity is the possibility of theorising shared moral and political commitment and the building of common institutional and organisational bonds to enable social cohesion in a way that need not limit diversity. For MacIntyre, provided there is a clear understanding that a virtuous life can be lived in the community, it is possible for diverse interests and identities to co-exist. However, in applying MacIntyre to the particular problem of solidarity in a diverse society, it should be recognised that he has largely explored such issues within philosophical discourse rather than substantively worked through political articulations. Nevertheless, his conception of virtuous communities constituted through practice can be usefully extended into a discussion of solidarity, providing foundations for shared moral and political cohesion.

In making solidarity, the community has a shared sense of the value of traditions, and the value of rival traditions in providing a common basis in how they contribute to what might be regarded as a good life and a meaningful life. MacIntyre draws a line between tolerance and intolerance of difference, which he anticipates as occurring both within groups and between groups that hold different position, within different traditions. He sees the impetus to find at least common frames of reference or departure points for debate important in the building of tolerance within a cohesive community. It is within the dialogue between different positions that MacIntyre (2006b: 207) sees disagreement and conflict as important:

> ...It is an in important part through disagreement and conflict that the common life of such groups is enriched. For it is only through development and conflict, only through aiming at conclusions that emerge from being tested by the most powerful counter- arguments available, that such groups are able to embody in their shared lives the rational pursuit and achievement of the relevant goods. Therefore when we evaluate the argumentative contributions to some ongoing debate within a group in whose life we participate, we should do so with an eye to how far they do or do not contribute to achieving the goods of conflict. So what is to be treated as intolerant is anything the toleration of which would tend to frustrate or prevent the achievement of those goods. Particular practices of or proposals for the practice of toleration can only be adequately evaluated from within the context of conflicts.

For MacIntyre, the recognition that different traditions have value both in the plurality they produce within a community and the terms of debate they make in conflict and disagreement, which requires a community to have a commitment to plurality. Whilst this will have limits in conflicts and disagreements over foundational values and their articulation in social space, there is a foundational value of recognising the value of plurality and in seeing the co-existence of traditions and their tensions and contradictions as providing fertile ground for a constant critical gaze that allows for momentum in considering change and development periodic and for the incremental remaking of the community by democratic processes.

This sense of virtue and commitment to flourishing is constituted in social practices. It comes not from a set of abstract values and rules that set coda for what is within and without the boundaries of the community.

It is embodied in the practices that utilise practical rationality of everyday life for the enriching of that community.2 These might include a civic commitment to serve in structures of governance of civil decision-making, or a commitment to charitable enterprise that enriches others lives, or a commitment to excellence in practicing the relationships and forms of creative enterprise that ensure the community flourishes. What is critical is that solidarity is practiced. It is a feature of that practices that are engaged in, which exhibit *arete* and *phronesis,* that they bind the community together so that solidarity is a condition of practice, and this engagement in practice and the exercise of practical reason integral to it is never an individual act. The argument can be extended to claim that practices underpinned by the critical rational enquiry to maintain their virtue cannot achieve the goals they set themselves unless they are seen as shared, interactive, engaged with others. It is that practice, the empathy and mutuality they produce, that reinforce the commitment to toleration and appreciation of the critical value of plural traditions in making a feasible and viable community. As MacIntyre (1999:156) observes:

> ...what social and political forms are required to achieve the common good of those who participate in the relevant kinds of relationship of giving and receiving........the moral and political relationships that are required for the achievement of that common good involve commitments that are in some respects conditional not only to a certain range of goods, but also to those particular others together with whom we attempt to achieve that common good.

A central feature of such a community and its solidarity would be its resistance to and counterbalance of the regressive tendencies of institutions and their atrophying effects on the value created by practices. It is the extent to which organisations and processes central to the community can avoid being bureaucratised and managerialised, and/or counter-balanced by the permeation of practices into how these processes function that is critical to any sense of a community with solidarity that do not lose their virtue.

There are invariably criticism that could be made of MacIntyre's approach to community, and its articulation with respect to solidarity. Such communities do not challenge the wider contexts of the modern capitalist economy and whilst macIntyre's concern is the sketch out the

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2 embodiment here refers to a recognition that practices involve regularised forms of practice and does not relate to Connolly's (1982) broader argument about biological embodiment and how *telos* is theorised

condition of possibility for a virtuous community, the permeability of that
community by capitalism, the terms of incommensurability in traditions
within the community, the possibilities of distributing power to ensure the
democratic terms and commitment of such a community, the practicality
of a turn away from institutions in all but the smallest communities and the
possibility that MacIntyre is positing a somewhat elitist community in
respect of the resources, education and collegiality of the community are
all open to question. yet MacIntyre does provide a distinctive approach to
thinking community cohesion that is valuable in thinking about terms of
solidarity within communities.

MacIntyre, Marxism and Solidarity: Some Reflections

MacIntyre's approach to a virtuous community, and the promise this
allows for a conceptualisation of community and society that underlines
the value of solidarity, is not without criticism. As Blackledge and
Davidson (2008) observe, part of the power of MacIntyre's critique is that
it embeds the enterprise of virtue within concrete history, if his withering
critique of the amorality of capitalism lacks a viable political alternative
for resistance to it outside the marginal communities. Callinicos (2011)
observes that the possibilities for revolutionary challenges to capitalism in
part arise from the enlightenment discourses that MacIntyre rejects, that
MacIntyre struggles to move beyond the inherent inequalities that an
Aristotelian notion of virtue seems to produce, and that MacIntyre's
politics are limited to the local. MacIntyre (2011) counters this claim by
noting that revolutionary politics start with participation in practices for
the common good, and that two conditions of such a politics that elude
Leninist alternatives are the free flow of information and the capacity for
questioning across centre-periphery relations within organisations.

Nevertheless, for Marxists whose vision is a politics that is founded on
a conception of solidarity in both the strategic development of a viable
political opposition that has mass appeal in the struggle for alternatives,
and a society that is founded on mutuality, collectivism and solidarity,
MacIntyre does have much to offer. The integration of solidarity through
practice, and through the necessity of sociality and collectivism in
practice, provides a central grounding for radical politics. Radical politics
becomes a critical engagement of the collective in producing a politics
from their practices, which draws its authenticity from within their
practices, and is constituted by practice. That conception of politics is a
counterweight to the idea that politics requires hierarchical organisational
structures and bureaucratic/managerial processes to be effective, and

requires such functions to be constituted within practices that retain democratic discourse, the free flow of critical thinking and the primacy of revolutionary politics over machinery of administration or governance. In thinking of the collective pooling of resources in local party organisation, where paying subscriptions, taking part in activities for the communication of ideas and working on campaigns and protests to both propagate a politics and build a movement based on alternative values, the task for the left is to have a co-ordination and organisation of such local politics within larger contexts without falling into the traps of bureaucratic/managerial politics. The party machinery, and the political-administrative structures theorised in a post-revolutionary scenario always have to be subordinate to and in service of the community itself, and the political mechanisms by which practices, critical reasoning and collective endeavour are enabled.

MacIntyre also provides a caution against the separation of the work of theorising both critiques of capitalism, the terms of strategies of opposition and the possibilities of alternatives and the practice of politics. The propagation of theory within academy or particular factions of revolutionary organisations gives rise to the production of barren abstracted articulations of theory that are divorced from the actual practices of making politics and change, and by their form and language often exclusive of the very people they should wish to engage. Again, MacIntyre provides a caution that even in the present context of theoretical work produced largely in and around the academy, urgent consideration should always be given to how these ideas are instantiated in a participative politics and in practices that circulate, share and encourage critical thinking as a collective activity.

Finally, MacIntyre's notion of tradition mitigates against closure from debates both across traditions, encouraging debate with those of other radical persuasions and with those of opposing traditions, and also debate within the traditions of radical thinking, not least the different and nuanced readings of Marx and propagations of Marxism. It allows for the possibility of making political progress through collective and participative politics that is not debilitated by sectarianism yet not afraid to encourage real debate and allow for the possibility of refining and amending positions in the moments of political struggle and protest. This inclusiveness might be limited given that radical political struggle does involve the reallocation of resources and the reorganisation of social structures and institutions, but it nevertheless speaks to the possibilities of a politics of struggle that can advance the interests and virtues of collectivist enterprise - greater equality, recognition of differences, recognition of mutual needs and desires and social justice - whilst not

being undermined by internal debates as to the exact terms of such enterprise and the struggles that make them.

Such a reading requires a longer, more detailed theoretical reflection and needs to combine a wider theoretical reading with a consideration of historical and contemporary politics and struggles. Here, there is simply a sketch of the possibilities MacIntyre's philosophy offers to a 21st century politics that places solidarity and difference, in balance, at the centre of its project. It is perhaps in the spirit of the essential collectivism of practice that this sketch and suggestion is nevertheless offered for consideration by the constituency of readers of this collection, to object, criticise and engage with in the interests of building more effective argument.

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