



Inclusive or exclusive happiness? Eudaimonia, acknowledged dependence, and the flourishing of disabled life

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1. Introduction

Three years ago, John Knight¹, released his study on human happiness which sparked broad interest and a multitude of comments. What was particularly innovative about his research was that he included a group of people living with Down Syndrome. The results showed that 99% of them are happy with their lives, and that 97% answered yes to the question, “Do you like who you are.” Why were these results such a surprise, not only for the sociologist and psychologist but also for the rest of American society. One of the reasons could be a strong contrast between this result and what seems to be a paradigm relating to the persons with Down Syndrome or other mental disability, which says that their lives are “unworthy to live” and “they never be happy and flourish” and can be legally aborted while still in mother’s womb. According to Jerome Lejeune Foundation², in 2006, “Denmark became the first European country to institute Down syndrome screening, a public health service that has been highly utilized. About 90% of Danish women undergo the screening. The results have been adverse

¹ John Knight, ”The Happiest People in the World”, desiringGod, dostęp 3 grudnia, 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-happiest-people-in-the-world>.

² “All Danish babies with Down syndrome aborted but 4 in 2016”, Jerome Lejeune Foundation, dostęp 3 grudnia, 2018, <https://lejeunefoundation.org/denmark-down-syndrome-abortion/>.

for babies with Down syndrome; all but four of the babies diagnosed with Down syndrome in Denmark in 2016 were aborted”.³ Could these decisions to terminate Down Syndrome prenatal babies, be altered if the study of John Knight had been more popularised in Denmark?

Knight’s study proved that there was a terrible mistake in the way that today’s western culture defines happiness and how arbitrary and exclusivist its judgment is over who deserves to be happy and who does not. Additionally, it shows how common the perception is that fundamentally human agency, which emanates primarily from the individual’s sets of abilities and skills, is responsible for his or her flourishing. Consequently, the disability, primary mental one, seems to have no claim in happiness or in flourishing and is considered a sentence of unhappiness and loneliness.

In my paper, I will argue that the perception that human agency of reason is the primary condition for happiness and flourishing has a well-established history which can be traced back to Aristotle and his concept of eudaimonia. Additionally, I will argue that his concept gives way for a reason-focused, exclusivist and self-oriented understanding of human happiness. In this paper, I will also try to provide an alternative way of understanding human happiness and flourishing that encompasses disabled people. In this task, the thought of neo-Aristotelian philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre will be my guide. In a particular way, his concept of acknowledged dependence will provide me with a useful guideline for including disabled people into the society where they can experience happiness and flourish.

My paper will consist of three main parts. In the first one, I will analyze the Aristotelian’s understanding of eudaimonia from the perspective of disability, highlighting those elements which might exclude certain people from sharing in happiness or diminish it. I will also try to show how the Aristotelian notion of happiness can be seen as self-oriented and exclusivistic. In the second part, I will present the basic concept behind MacIntyre’s idea of human dependence and how recognition and acknowledgment of this dependency are essential for creating a virtuous society.

Finally, I will try to present how MacIntyre’s concept might serve as a guideline for welcoming disabled people into society and creating the appropriate environment for their flourishing and happiness.

2. Is *eudaimonia* for everyone?

Among the many different schools and traditions of thought concerning what happiness consists in, one seems to be of the utmost importance. In observing and interpreting the world, Aristotle discerned that, among

³ Ibidem.

many human's various wantings, one prevails over the rest and this is the desire to be happy. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, he undertakes the task to explain the nature of *eudaimonia* which is commonly translated as a happiness.

Aristotle starts his book by stating that all human activities aim at some good, and longing to achieve this good is a universal human condition. Among various goods, which might be some activities or products of these activities Aristotle points to the one which is desired for its own sake, and names it as a "chief good"⁴. Knowing the "chief good" is like an archer having a mark to direct his arrow⁵ and properly direct his efforts. Speaking about the "chief good", Aristotle states that "there is very general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness (*eudaimonia*) and identify living well and faring well with being happy, but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same account as the wise"⁶.

The philosopher acknowledges that happiness is desired by all the people for its own sake, but there is no common agreement on its shape. It primarily depends on the type of life that the individual lives. Accordingly, for the vulgar type, happiness is identified by pleasures, for the political with honor and for contemplative lives with activity of contemplation⁷. But besides providing these various examples of happiness, Aristotle wants to give a more precise description of *eudaimonia* by reflecting upon the function of the man⁸. The philosopher believes that "just as for a flute-player, a sculptor, or any artist, and, in general, for all things that have a function or activity, the good and the 'well' is thought to reside in the function, so would it seem to be for man, if he has a function"⁹.

At this point, we can ask what function of man can be used to achieve *eudaimonia*. Aristotle makes it clear that it is neither growth nor nutrition which are shared with the plant's world. Also, it would not be perception which is active in the animal's world. He determines that the unique human function is "an active life of the element that has a reason"¹⁰. In this way, the function of man is a "certain kind of life, and this to be an activity or actions

⁴ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, tłum. Davide Ross, w: Lesley Brown, *Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), NE.1.2 1094a, 24.

⁵ NE.1.2 1094a, 25.

⁶ NE..1.4.1095a, 17-21.

⁷ NE..I.5.1095b,15-19.

⁸ NE..I.7 1097b,25.

⁹ NE. I.7 1097b,26-30.

¹⁰ NE..I.7 1098a,1-5.

of the soul implying a rational principle, and the function of a good man to be the good and noble performance of these”¹¹.

Eventually, for Aristotle “human good turns out to be the activity of soul exhibiting virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete”¹². At this point, we can see that the chief good, which is *eudaimonia* can be achieved by certain virtuous activities which are orchestrated by human reason.

Consequently, Aristotelian *eudaimonia* can be seen as constructed upon two fundamental elements; the activity of the soul and reason, which direct the previous. Additionally, both can be seen as active and passive factors on *eudaimonia*. They are inseparably joined in such a way that it can be said that happiness would not be possible or at least would be substantially diminished if the individual would be missing one of this elements.

Aristotle is explicit that if the person only possesses virtues but does not actualizes them then he or she can be seen as “being asleep, or with lifelong inactivity”¹³ and in this state “no one would call [him or her] happy”¹⁴. Only the life which is lived as a virtuous activity can lead the person to happiness and could be considered praiseworthy similar to “the Olympic Games were not the most beautiful and the strongest that are crowned but those who compete...so those who act win and rightly win, the noble and good things in life”¹⁵.

In the light of this, it can be asked, what is the place for disabled persons in this Aristotelian *eudaimonia*? Are they discriminated against and excluded on the basis of their body or mind impairments? Are they able to live a virtuous life? Aristotle does not give us precise answers to this questions. None of his almost 400 books specifically dealt with the issue of human disability. However, in his *Politics* we read “As to the exposure and rearing of children, let there be a law that no deformed child shall live”¹⁶.

Aristotle’s emphasis on the activity of the soul reveals a serious barrier preventing disabled people from achieving *eudaimonia*. For the philosopher, this active factor of *eudaimonia* is fundamental, and he reasserts that happiness “is not a state; for if it were, it might belong to someone who was asleep throughout his life, living the life of a plant, or, again, to someone

¹¹ NE. I.7 1098a,14-15.

¹² NE.I.7 1098a,16-18.

¹³ NE. I.6 1095b,32.

¹⁴ NE. I.6 1096a,1.

¹⁵ NE. I.8 1099a,3-8.

¹⁶ Id, *Politics*, tłum. Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), Księga 7, 1335b.

who was suffering the greatest misfortunes”¹⁷. Consequently, Aristotle acknowledges that “we must rather class happiness as an activity”¹⁸.

A consequence of having an activity as a factor of happiness is the possibility of differentiating and valuing it. Accordingly, the highest and most precious form of happiness can be obtained by those activities which “are desirable in themselves from which nothing is sought beyond the activity”¹⁹. For Aristotle, examples of such activity are the virtuous actions because “to do noble and good deeds is a thing desirable for its own sake”²⁰. The philosopher goes further in distinguishing the hierarchy of happiness, and claims that the highest instance should be relegated to the realm of the human reason²¹. Therefore, for Aristotle, perfect happiness can be obtained through the contemplative activity.

In the light of these, the physical and mental limitations of disabled people serve as a quasi-limiters of happiness, substantially diminishing possible state of *eudaimonia*. Even if the disabled person were to perform certain physical and mental activity, but do not meet the higher standards required for virtuous life or contemplative life, Aristotle would probably rank the quality of their happiness rather poorly. Similarly, he judges that the slave “can enjoy the bodily pleasures no less than the best man; but no one assigns to a slave a share in happiness”²².

Besides exercising virtuous activities, Aristotelian happiness also assumes the use of reason which, ultimately, seems to be mastered in the contemplative life. The philosopher praises this saying that: “this activity is the best (since not only is the reason the best thing in us, but the objects of reason are the best of knowable objects); and, secondly, it is the most continuous, since we can contemplate truth more continuously than we can do anything”²³. It is important to emphasize here the prioritization of reason. Aristotle claims elsewhere that “If reason is divine, then, in comparison with man, the life according to it is divine in comparison with human life”²⁴. Consequently, “the life according to reason is best and pleasantest since reason more than anything else is the man. This life, therefore, is also the happiest”²⁵.

¹⁷ NE. X.6 1175b32-35.

¹⁸ NE. X.6 1176b1-5.

¹⁹ NE. X.6 1176b5.

²⁰ NE. X.6 1176b8.

²¹ NE. X.7 1177a18.

²² NE. X.6 1177a6-11.

²³ NE. X.7 1176b19-23.

²⁴ NE. X.7 1177b30-31.

²⁵ NE. X.7 1178a7-9.

Reading these words from the perspective of mentally disabled people might sound rather an exclusivistic, and discriminative, because it assess their happiness as imperfect. Furthermore, in the case of severely impaired mental capacity, it can be assumed that Aristotle would probably deny that they share in *eudaimonia* at all. Is this not a place where we can see some connection with the Danish's Down Syndrome screening program and massive abortions? If reason is "divine" and a life lived with the usage of this human agency the happiest one, then the mentally disabled baby with Down Syndrome categorically presents a less valuable life.

At this point, we can clearly see that Aristotelian *eudaimonia* does not apply equally to all people, but instead differentiates between those capable of virtuous actions and sound reasoning and those who, by the misfortune of the fate, lack these qualities. The particular group which seems to be primarily affected by Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is the mentally disabled population.

Eudaimonia works in an exclusionary way. In addition, it provides a contrast to the hedonistic approach to happiness, where the primary goal is to attain pleasure and avoid pain, Aristotle's concept focuses on self-realization and defines happiness regarding the degree to which a person uses his agencies. Besides its exclusionary character, we can also identify some traces of self-orientation and self-sufficiency in *eudaimonia*. It can be recognized notably when Aristotle, in the context of contemplative life says that: "...philosopher, as well as a just man or one possessing any other virtue, needs the necessities of life, when they are sufficiently equipped with things of that sort the just man needs people towards whom and with whom he shall act justly, and the temperate man, the brave man, and each of the others is in the same case, but the philosopher, even when by himself, can contemplate truth, and the better the wiser he is; he can perhaps do so better if he has fellow workers, but still he is the most self-sufficient"²⁶.

We can extract from this passage two things. First, Aristotle acknowledges that the presence and assistance of other people are crucial. However, in his second point he asserts that the state of contemplation, which according to him is a pure state of happiness, can be successfully realized alone. Aristotle's openness to others having a role and the value of the friendship he places on friendship will serve as the basis for Alastair MacIntyre concept of acknowledged dependency in which a disability will be seen in a broader, societal context.

Aristotelian *eudaimonia* has a noble and well-respected place in the history of the humanity's search for the meaning of happiness. Its influence seems to be significant for contemporary western culture. However, the two

²⁶ NE. X.7 1177a27-34.

central elements around which the concept is constructed, activity and reason, carry the potential to be an exclusivistic and discriminative force directed toward disabled people, primarily the mentally challenged.

Aristotelian *eudaimonia* is not the same for everyone. The philosopher seems to differentiate between better and worse kinds of happiness. At this point we can ask, is there another concept of happiness which can encompass the disabled life? Is there another concept that will provide the proper tools to recognize a possible environment for cognitively disabled people to live happy and fulfilled life? The answer is, yes, there is a new way of reflecting upon human happiness which, interestingly, is proposed by contemporary neo-Aristotelian philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. In the next part of this paper, I am going to argue that his idea of flourishing carries specific practical advice which can transform the lives of many disabled people into a more open and positive experience.

3. The project of acknowledged dependence

A particularly interesting fact is that MacIntyre as a neo-Aristotelian philosopher, was able to read his “master” in such a way that he could discover some inspirations for his concept of acknowledged dependency. As it was said before, Aristotle did not reflect much upon human disability, and even in the places where he did, his message was rather controversial for contemporary readers²⁷. So, what part of the Aristotelian corpus, could inspire MacIntyre? The best possible answer would point to Aristotle’s vision of *polis* which, as Elena Irrera notes, has the potential for virtue and “paves the way for the idea that a well-organized community, although aiming at the common advantage, may present traits that are typical of virtuous friendship”²⁸. According to Aristotle the process of forming a community is “the work of friendship...for friendship is the intentional choice of living together”²⁹. In this way of understanding community’s role and dynamic, MacIntyre managed to discover some potentially fertile soil to plant the seeds of a reflection on human vulnerability and disability. Therefore, it is possible to see MacIntyre’s project more as a refinement of Aristotelian *eudaimonia* rather than an alternative.

At the beginning of his book, *Dependent Rational Animals*, MacIntyre states clearly that “We human beings are vulnerable to many kinds of af-

²⁷ See the fragment about handicap children in Aristotle, *Politics*, 1335b.

²⁸ Elena Irrera, “Perfect Friendship in the Political Realm”, w: *Aristotle’s Practical Philosophy. On the relationship between His Ethics and Politics*, red. Emma Cohen de Lara, Rene Brouwer (Springer, 2017), 147.

²⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, Księga 3, 1280b38-39.

fiction and most of us are at some time afflicted by serious ills”³⁰. This awareness frames his further reflections and is the basis for his idea of unavoidable dependency on others’ support. Although the human condition of vulnerability and dependency is organically inscribed into human experience, not much reflection, as MacIntyre notes, has been paid to its nature and dynamic, “From Plato to Moore (...) only passing references to human vulnerability and affliction and to the connections between them and our dependence on others has been present”³¹. Considering this omission, MacIntyre rightly asks, “what difference to moral philosophy would it make if we were to treat the facts of vulnerability and affliction and the related facts of dependence as central to the human condition?”³²

This question opens a new and unexplored space for reflection on human existence, and overcoming a taboo concerning issues of vulnerability, disability, and dependency. Compared to Aristotle’s admiration for human reasoning capability and virtuous activity MacIntyre’s reflection cuts across the trend of silencing discussion of human limitations and the marginalization of persons with such limitations. The fundamental step in altering this mindset starts with reforming memory, which will entail not only recalling historical facts, but primarily, as MacIntyre indicates, to remember “our bodies and...how our thinking is the thinking of one species of animal”³³. Only after this first step can we proceed further in the process of understanding the nature of the relationship between our animal condition and our vulnerabilities.

Understanding of our initial animal condition will allow us to develop “into that of independent rational agents”³⁴. In this process, a particular set of virtues have to be practiced, which can be named as the virtues of *acknowledged dependence*. Through this moral activity, the individuals can identify how and why they are needed and needful, and thereby understand their essential place within a human community.

This fundamental orientation constitutes the basis for the experience of happiness, which, for MacIntyre, is inseparably joined with human flourishing emanated in functioning as an independent reasoner. At this point, we can perceive crucial similarities with Aristotle’s eudaimonia, which also sees human flourishing as an integral part of happiness. However, the difference might be the extent to which an individual needs the support and

³⁰ Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Needs the Virtues* (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1999), 1.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 3.

³² *Ibidem*, 4.

³³ *Ibidem*, 5.

³⁴ *Ibidem*.

assistance of others in order to obtain this state. MacIntyre believes that this presence is organic. Another difference seems to be the way independent reasoners are defined and what, almost physiological qualities, can be attributed to them. Again, MacIntyre goes further than his „master” embracing impairment and disability life.

MacIntyre undertakes a project of embracing the full human condition with its vulnerability, disability, and dependency. It is only by doing so, he contends, that the virtues of acknowledged dependence can be cultivated and practiced. More importantly, the positive climate within community or society toward human dependency lays the foundation for such an understanding of human happiness, which has the tools to embrace disabled people, allowing them to experience happiness. At this point, we can see that MacIntyre’s understanding of happiness presents a new way of reading Aristotle’s *eudaimonia* allowing it to be more receptive of disabled lives.

In the next section, I will delve more deeply into the subject of happiness and flourishing, highlighting its communal and inclusive character.

4. Flourishing and happiness

Every living creature has a particular set of conditions under which it can properly grow and develop. This favorable climate of flourishing requires, as MacIntyre notes, development of the “distinctive powers that it possess qua member of that species”. In some way, these particular powers, waiting to be activated, can be recognized as sets of goods for the individual. The example of such a power would be care for others and the acceptance of being cared for which ultimately flows from acknowledging one’s vulnerability and dependency. Consequently, the concept of flourishing in this respect resembles other concepts that involve the more fundamental concept of “good”.

Following MacIntyre’s logic, we need to consider the threefold classification of ascriptions of good. There are first those ascriptions of good by which we evaluate something only as a means. We can understand possessing certain skills or opportunities as a good as long as it will bring about some further good. These things are good only as a means to something further that is in itself good. The second type of ascription of goodness recognizes that there are certain goods valued as ends worth pursuing for their own sake if they are to be pursued at all. If we judge someone good in some role, MacIntyre explains, it is because we recognize certain activities as good in itself³⁵. Consequently, “to be excellent in achieving the goods of this or that particular practice is to be good qua member of a fishing crew

³⁵ Ibidem, 65.

or *qua* mother of a family or *qua* chess player or soccer player”³⁶. (I am not familiar with the use of *qua*, sounds funny).

But this is not the whole picture so in order to complete it, we need to move from a general approach toward a more specific one and ask “whether it is good for her or him that the goods of this or that particular practice should have this or that place in her or his life”³⁷. This specific application of certain goods in the particular context of someone’s life, and more broadly in the context of society or community, represents the third type of ascription of good. On this level, we judge “unconditionally about what it is best for individuals or groups to be or do or have not only *qua* agents engaged in this or that form of activity in this or that role or roles but also *qua* human beings”³⁸.

This is precisely the kind of reflection which MacIntyre relates to human flourishing. At this point, we can recognize, the specific dynamic of achieving human flourishing, which moves from good as a means, through genuine goods to the particular application and contextualizing of them. It is only when we reach the last step that we can recognize the specific conditions in which an individual can flourish. It is because we have all the necessary ingredients in one place. We can compare this to the particular conditions required by a specific plant to grow and bloom. Every plant has a unique set of requirements regarding light, temperature, soil quality, etc. In this same way, MacIntyre understands human flourishing as occurring within a unique set of conditions where specific needs are satiated.

Although MacIntyre does not use the word “happiness” in the context of human flourishing, nevertheless his understanding of this state perfectly fits the common understanding of the idea of happiness. Accordingly, I will examine MacIntyre’s concept of human flourishing as a particular proposition of how happiness should be understood. Specifically, I will focus on how MacIntyre’s model embraces disabled people and emphasizes the communal dynamic of happiness.

The fundamental element in this analysis is MacIntyre’s concept of *reciprocal dependency*, which is not a limitation but rather the factor which creates possibilities for growth. As MacIntyre explains, dependence is the state where I rely on someone else to get what I need but not in a selfish mode but in the dynamic of reciprocity between giving and receiving. This dynamic is organically inscribed into human experience and is expressed in crucial moments, like being carried in one’s mother’s womb and later being fed and cared for by her. As long as this fundamental dynamic of

³⁶ Ibidem, 68.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ Ibidem, 67.

dependency is not acknowledged, one's understanding of human nature will be incomplete. Additionally, dependence as a natural human condition is reflected in the dynamic of flourishing, in which, as MacIntyre reminds us, the process of giving and receiving plays a fundamental role. Additionally, we discover our personhood "through participation in a set of relationships to certain particular others who can give us, what we need"³⁹. Again, for MacIntyre, this dynamic of receiving does not work in a selfish mode but implies ability "to give to those others who are now in need of what formerly we needed"⁴⁰. In this way, the state of happiness gets a specific shape of "a network of relationships of giving and receiving"⁴¹. Consequently, the happiness of the individual depends on the happiness of the other members of the community.

The environment in which an individual flourishes entails the presence of others. In the case of *acknowledged dependence*, there is cooperation and exchange that contributes to the state of happiness. What is more, in the process of achieving the state of happiness, the individual realizes a particular obligation, formulated as a kind of debt owed to many people who helped him in various ways. As MacIntyre rightly notes "...the repayment of the debts in question is not and cannot be a matter of strict reciprocity, and not only because those to whom one is called upon to give are very often not the same individuals as those from whom one received"⁴².

Individuals in their state of happiness ought to acknowledge that the foundations for this state were laid by numerous people, to whom they are indebted. And often enough "what we receive and what we give are incommensurable: there is generally, for example, no relevant way of comparing what our parents gave us by way of care and education with what we are called upon to give to the same parents by way of care in illness or old age"⁴³. But even in the situation in which our parents die before we can "payback" our debt, there is still a way to give the good which I received by caring for other people who are around us.

Therefore, a general characteristic of the MacIntyrian system is that the individual's happiness always looks for the possibility to pay back the debt by giving to others what they really need, and by giving them happiness. Also, there is no true human flourishing without the awareness of having a responsibility for others regarding necessary care and support. This dynamic opens a particular space for embracing disabled people. Before

³⁹ Ibidem, 99.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Ibidem, 100.

⁴³ Ibidem.

we say more about this, we need to mention another important element of *acknowledged dependence*.

As MacIntyre explains, at the heart of this dynamic lays the particular sense of similarity between all human beings. This similarity relates to both biological and social dimensions. All human beings carry the same bodily structure and are placed in some social reality. What is more, in the situation of disability, where we could be faced with "...the brain-damaged, those almost incapable of movement, of the autistic, of all such we have to say: this could have been us"⁴⁴, this sense of similarity acknowledges that "their mischances could have been ours, our good fortune could have been theirs"⁴⁵. This awareness ignites a particular response in the face of disability where healthy and fortunate individuals recognize a kind of responsibility to care for those who are less privileged. The specific actions will depend on the capabilities of the privileged individual and might take the shape of financial support, voluntary service or prayer. But in any way, they cannot claim that the fate of disabled people is not their concern at all. In this way, the flourishing of healthy members of the community is organically and reciprocally related to the well-being of the disabled population.

At this point, we can recognize a fundamental difference from Aristotelian *eudaimonia*, where disability was neglected. Aristotle's concept of happiness is reserved for those members of the community who are fit enough to practice their virtues, particularly in terms of their mental capability. There is no sense of similarity and *acknowledged dependence* in the context of disability and vulnerability. MacIntyre's concept of flourishing embraces human disability, creating a possible space for experiencing happiness. Additionally, he provides practical suggestions for how the flourishing of disabling life can be achieved.

5. Practical application

Once we recognize the importance of acknowledged dependency and similarity for human flourishing, particularly in the context of disability, we can examine how it can be put into practice. For MacIntyre, the primary condition for flourishing is exercising one's independence in recognizing and perceiving goods. For disabled people, although there might be different levels of limitations related to mental capability, the space of independence is always present and waiting to be recognized⁴⁶. Independence, as

⁴⁴ Ibidem.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 101.

⁴⁶ Obviously, we need to acknowledge that there are such conditions which permanently unable the person to use properly their mind. Such a condition

MacIntyre describes it, is “both the ability and the willingness to evaluate the reasons for action advanced to one by others, so that one, makes oneself accountable for one’s endorsement of the practical conclusions of others as well as for one’s own conclusions”⁴⁷. In the reality of human disability, this independence is still applicable. The prime condition for this, besides the certain mental capability, is the space where disabled people can autonomously recognize and voice what is important for them, and how they want to participate in this recognized good.

A common mistake in dealing with disability is the omission of the most important voice, that of disabled people themselves. Legislative processes relating to disabled people typically come from a paternalistic position. Positive change can come by giving voice to disabled people through dialogue. Acknowledged dependency manifests itself in openness to listening to others’ stories and narrations. MacIntyre makes it clear when he says in *After Virtue* that “narrative form captures best the central characteristics of human life and agency”⁴⁸.

Shane Clifton, a disability scholar, in his book *Crippled Grace* explains how important story is to framing one’s self-identity: “The stories we tell about ourselves, the events, achievements and failures we narrate and the interpretations we take, frame our self-understanding and make a vital contribution to the shape of our future”⁴⁹.

The stories disabled people are ready to tell contains their worries, joys, hopes, and challenges. They all express the desire to be independent and to be recognized as independent individuals. Acknowledged interdependency opens the way in which individuals, can see the importance of other’s narrations. By listening to them, they can hear their real needs and respond in a proper way. From the other side, being heard engages one’s feeling of being an independent rational agent. So, there is a connection between listening to narrations and the scene of independence.

Hence, greater openness to dialogue and listening to disabled people’s stories would be a model example of a practical application of Mac-

might be; the last stages of dementia, severe damages to the brain caused by accidents. The possible threshold level of cognitive capacity required for an individual to be able to exercise independent rationality would be self-awareness and capability of communicating with the outside world, be the means of words or other methods.

⁴⁷ MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Needs the Virtues*, 105.

⁴⁸ Id, *After Virtue. A study in Moral Theory*, wyd. 3 (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 144.

⁴⁹ Shane Clifton, *Crippled Grace* (Waco TX: Baylor University Press, 2018), 95.

Intyre's concept of human flourishing. The happiness of the community depends on how well their healthy members listen and respond to the needs of disabled members.

Besides the independence in recognizing the goods and values of disabled people, MacIntyre adds another dimension, which is independence in the process of realizing these goods⁵⁰. Put another way, it involves recognizing spaces of personal independence in the context of disability. Impairment does not always automatically result in total dependency. Although, in some situations, the severity of one's limitations does not leave much room for independence. In the majority of these cases, we can recognize such spaces of potential independence which can manifest itself through physical or mental capabilities.

Shane Clifton, being himself disabled, emphasizes the importance of creating a positive climate for encouraging disabled people to overcome their obstacles and challenges on their own instead of providing for them with a ready made solution. This is the idea of "activation of disabled people"⁵¹. The primary underlying concept is the recognition not only that a human person, by his work, produces something, but, more importantly, that work constitutes and dignifies oneself. This dynamic explains Pope St. John Paul II claim in his encyclical *Laborem exercens*, that "work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work"⁵². Additionally, the pope emphasizes that "work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity, the mark of a person operating within a community of persons. And this mark decides its interior characteristics; in a sense, it constitutes its very nature"⁵³.

MacIntyre's concept of flourishing, in regard to disabled people, precisely calls for greater participation from this group. Through this, disabled people can discover their ability to contribute to their community. This awareness, according to MacIntyre, lies at the core of human flourishing, where reciprocity between giving and receiving is foundational. Conse-

⁵⁰ See, MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Needs the Virtues*, 133. MacIntyre explains that independence emanates in pursuit of good.

⁵¹ See more Clifton, *Crippled Grace*, 85. Author describes his own story being encouraged to "rewrite" his life and continue his academic career.

⁵² John Paul II, *Laborem exercens* (1981), dostęp listopad, 2018, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html. Text is in the part called Blessing.

⁵³ Ibidem.

quently, this possible state of happiness entails not only receiving what one needs, but also giving what others might need.

The situation in which disabled people are solely recipients of goods without any possibility to give something in return might create a pathological condition of total dependency and deprivation of flourishing and happiness. To prevent this situation, the community is obliged to watch over the delicate balance between giving and receiving. The community realizes this mission in different ways. First of all, the community has to initiate special conditions in which the disabled person will be able to create some goods. Second, once such goods are produced, the community is obliged to recognize them as a valuable contribution to the structure. Finally, the community needs to reward the disabled person for his or her work and provide the necessary support and protection to allow further production of certain goods. The community's mission can be realized only after recognition of a fundamental dependency and similarity between all members. By creating a space for disabled people's independence, the community secures a robust structure conducive to individual and communal flourishing.

How disabled people can contribute to their community is twofold. First, by creating particular goods, both material and services; second, by their very person who carries a challenge of disability⁵⁴. While the first type of contribution is rather easy to be recognized and appreciated by the community, the second needs further explanation. By nature, disability creates a unique call for response and help. As MacIntyre emphasizes, the ability to recognize and respond to this call indicates whether the community is capable of being a place of flourishing for every member or not. The community needs to learn the lesson of hearing its disabled members' call. It is only by disabled people's presence within the community that it can obtain specific virtues, such as patience, compassion, and mercy. It is through the cultivation of such virtues that MacIntyre claims we are able "to participate in the relationships of giving and receiving through which our ends as practical reasoners are to be achieved"⁵⁵.

In the dynamic of *acknowledged dependence*, where we experience the relationship of giving and receiving, one virtue plays a particular role: mercy. This is because in this one virtue we can recognize the set of other positive attitudes which can contribute to both individual and communal flourishing. To explain it better, I will use the parable of the Good Samaritan in St. Luke's gospel. In this story, we recognize one vulnerable person, an assaulted and beaten merchant left barely alive on the side of the road.

⁵⁴ See MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Needs the Virtues*, 138.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 105.

The other character is a merciful Samaritan. In his response to this tragic situation, we can find the same essential elements which are present in MacIntyre's concept of *acknowledged dependence*.

First, there is the hearing of vulnerability's call, which causes in the Samaritan a deep sense of compassion. At this point, he recognizes not only the call of a vulnerable person, but also finds similarity with him; even though he does not belong to the same community as the vulnerable man. The next step is a series of concrete actions to save the person. Among them are intimate ones like dressing his wounds, but also long-term actions exemplified by taking him to the inn and covering all necessary expenses for recovery. The Samaritan acts in a twofold way: he recognizes dependency and creates an environment for healing. A similar understanding of mercy is given by St. Thomas Aquinas, who defines it as "the compassion in our hearts for another person's misery, compassion which drives us to do what we can to help him"⁵⁶. For St. Thomas, this virtue has two aspects: "affective" mercy and "effective" mercy, which maps on to the before-mentioned twofold way.

A valuable lesson on the virtue of compassion can be taught by vulnerable members of the community, which, in most cases, are disabled persons. The community cannot learn the virtues of patience, compassion, or generosity, without them. It is impossible to overcome a vice of selfishness without the presence of people in real need. Communal flourishing is organically related to how members respond to the call of the vulnerable. The ability to contribute to the community in the case of disabled people takes a particular shape through lesson and testimony.

This conclusion can be illustrated by the relationship between the gardener and the garden. Although it is the gardener who performs all the activities, it is the garden itself which creates a unique opportunity for a gardener to grow in the virtue of gardening. This reciprocal relationship of giving and receiving constitutes what can be seen as the virtuous gardener and the beautiful garden. Even more, the *telos* of the plants in this garden is to flourish, and in this state of unique flourishing, they contribute to the overall beauty of the garden which is the state of their flourishing and finally contributing to the flourishing of a gardener. This cycle of mutually related flourishing seems to exemplify the nature of MacIntyre's relationship between the disabled person and the community.

Shane Clifton contends that "disability enriches society". He believes that "almost every human virtue arises as a response to hardship so that the virtues of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithful-

⁵⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, IIa-IIae, q. 30, a. 1, tłum. ojcowie Angielskiej Prowincji Dominikanów.

ness, gentleness and self-control are potently manifest in communities enriched by people with disabilities”⁵⁷. A disabled life carries the potential for happiness and flourishing. However, to actualize it, there needs to be a particular condition of acknowledged dependency and similarity. One way we can get a picture of this is by looking at the work of *L’Arche* communities where people with and without disability live and work together as peers. Jean Vanier, the founder of these communities, observes, “People with disabilities have profound lessons to teach us. When we do include them, they add richly to our lives and immensely to our world”. It is done not “because disability provides able-bodied people with the opportunity to be charitable, or because people with disabilities are especially virtuous, but because virtues are best worked out in the midst of the vulnerabilities of life”⁵⁸.

6. Conclusion

Happiness as the most desired thing in this world has a wide range of understanding. Differences between them are primarily located around the question of the necessary conditions to achieve it. I examined two philosophical concepts regarding human happiness in the particular context of disabled life. Following the tradition of Aristotle’s *eudaimonia*, happiness is tightly related to pursuing the virtuous life. Although it might look like a correct understanding of human happiness, with emphasis put on the virtues, but after a closer examination, certain flaws began to appear. First, Aristotle’s emphasis on the human agency of reasoning leads him to the point where perfect happiness can be achieved only by exercising this mental capability. Such an understanding creates two kinds of happiness, the perfect one, reserved for those who master their mind and virtuous actions and imperfect, for those for whom this activity is unreachable.

The refinement of this model can be found in MacIntyre’s concept of acknowledged dependency, which involves openness to communal dynamics and embraces the entire spectrum of human vulnerabilities; therefore, it offers a more robust understanding of happiness and flourishing. In Addition, by accepting MacIntyre’s model, happiness becomes more defined in terms of relationship between giving and receiving. At the center of this relationship is the acknowledgment of fundamental human similarity, through which disability is not a barrier to happiness and flourishing but a precious opportunity for growth.

Looking at the contemporary world with its deep divisions and conflicts, which have their origin in extreme individualism and marginaliza-

⁵⁷ Clifton, *Crippled Grace*, 36.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

tion, especially of the most vulnerable populations, one possible way of resolving this situation is to emphasize the value of community, solidarity, the dynamic of giving and receiving, acknowledged dependency, and appreciation of disabled life. In this way, it is possible that by accepting MacIntyre's concept of flourishing that the happiness of Down Syndrome people would no longer be questioned and the disabled life would not be regarded as less valuable. What model of happiness will be passed on to future generations, will it be one that is open to a communal dimension and fundamental similarity among human beings; or will it be more individualistic and exclusive? The answer to this will depend on today's decisions and choices. I hope that my paper will initiate further discussion around the importance of a robust understanding of human happiness.

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Inkluzywne czy ekskluzywne szczęście? Eudaimonia (przejęta zależność) i rozwój życia dotkniętego niepełnosprawnością

STRESZCZENIE

Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje refleksję nad rozumieniem ludzkiego szczęścia w kontekście niepełnosprawności, ze szczególnym ukierunkowaniem na dysfunkcję intelektualną. W realizacji zadania autor sięga po dwie filozoficzne koncepcje, porównując Arystotelesową eudaimonię z koncepcją „przyjętej zależności” Alasdaira MacIntyry. Główna oś różnicy przebiega wzdłuż rozumienia podstawowych warunków wymaganych do przeżywania szczęścia. Podczas gdy dla Arystotelesa, idealne szczęście utożsamiane jest przede wszystkim z aktywnością intelektualną, MacIntyre daje pierwszeństwo wspólnotowej dynamice, stwarzając tym samym przestrzeń dla szczęścia i rozwoju życia, które zostało dotknięte niepełnosprawnością. Niniejszy artykuł, obok rozpoznania filozoficznych różnic w rozumieniu szczęścia w kontekście niepełnosprawności, dostarcza również konkretnych wskazówek, w jaki sposób osoby dotknięte ograniczeniami fizyczno-intelektualnymi mogą być przyjęte i zintegrowane ze społeczeństwem, oraz w jaki sposób można kształtować środowisko sprzyjające ich szczęściu oraz rozwojowi.

Słowa kluczowe: ludzkie szczęście, niepełnosprawność, dysfunkcja intelektualna, Arystoteles, MacIntyre

Inclusive or exclusive happiness? Eudaimonia, acknowledged dependence, and the flourishing of disabled life

SUMMARY

The article undertakes the reflection concerning human happiness in a particular context of disability, with a prime focus on mental retardation. In this task, the author reaches for two philosophical concepts, confronting Aristotelian eudaimonia with the Alasdair MacIntyre's concept of acknowledged dependency. The central axis of differences runs through the recognition of primary conditions, required to experience happiness. Whereas, Aristotle sees the perfect happiness as being achieved primarily by exercising mental capability, MacIntyre, however, gives priority to the communal

dynamics, creating a space for experiencing happiness and flourishing in the context of disabled life. The article, besides recognition of different philosophical approaches, gives a guideline for welcoming disabled people into society and creating the appropriate environment for their flourishing and happiness.

Keywords: human happiness, disability, mental retardation, Aristotle, MacIntyre