

Chapter 1 : Whose Justice? Which Rationality? | Alasdair MacIntyre | download

Whose Justice? Which Rationality? is a book of moral philosophy by the Scottish philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre. In the book, MacIntyre argues that there are a number of different and incompatible accounts of practical reasoning or rationality—specifically those of Aristotle, Augustine, David Hume (and more broadly the "Scottish school).

By Introduction This is an important book, a book with which Muslims, in particular, need to become acquainted. The author, Alasdair MacIntyre, is one of the most profound and most controversial moralists and social thinkers of our time. The book, *Whose Justice?* Is not an easy work it requires some familiarity with various details of Western culture, in particular its moral and political philosophies. So, rather than merely summarize the work, I will try to show why I think it is important for Muslim thinkers to read and criticize it. Finally, I offer some humble criticisms of my own, and suggestions for further research. Of all those who have stood against the currents of modernism, Alasdair MacIntyre stands out as the philosopher who has offered the most profound critique. His *After Virtue*, which was first published in 1984, sent shock waves through the Western intellectual world. This rejection of modernist thinking was focused upon moral philosophy, but it attracted the attention of a readership much wider than what could be expected for a book in ethics. In the field of ethics, MacIntyre has spawned a revival of interest in Aristotelian ethics with such force that it is now generally recognized as a serious rival to the two major strands of moral philosophy that have been dominant in the West since the Enlightenment utilitarianism and Kantianism. Numerous books and articles have been written since the publication of *After Virtue* proclaiming the advantages of an Aristotelian virtue ethics over utilitarian consequentialism and Kantian deontology. It was largely in response to this sort of misunderstanding which followed the publication of *After Virtue* that MacIntyre was motivated to write the sequel, *Whose Justice?* So, one reason for reading MacIntyre is because his work has been tremendously influential, even among those who disagree with his positions. Another reason would be interest in the topics he discusses: For Muslims, however, there are additional reasons to read MacIntyre. One of the most important issues in Islamic social and political thought since the nineteenth century has been the confrontation of traditional Muslim societies with European modernism, and one of the most important facets of modernism about which Muslim thinkers are concerned is that of political liberalism. Muslims who argue that liberal ideals and institutions are compatible with Islam are usually classified as modernists. At the other extreme are those who would claim that liberal and Islamic thought agree on nothing. The vast majority of Muslim intellectuals and scholars, however, fall somewhere between these extremes. The interesting discussion in contemporary Muslim social thought is not over whether modernists or conservatives hold a more defensible position, but what aspects of liberal thought may be accommodated and what aspects must be rejected. Furthermore, the philosophical perspective he seeks to defend, a form of Neo Thomism with a strong emphasis on Aristotle, is more similar to the philosophical perspective of traditional Islamic thought than are any of the other major tendencies to be found among contemporary Western philosophers. Perhaps if Muslim modernists would read MacIntyre they would become more critical of the claims made on behalf of liberalism, and would come to recognize the need to examine the intellectual history of their own traditions, as well as those of the West, to find the way forward. *After Virtue* The book which initially provoked the great storm of controversy was *After Virtue*, and in order to understand the true significance of *Whose Justice?* One must understand something about the earlier work. *After Virtue* begins with the disquieting suggestion that moral discourse in the West has lost its meaning, that it serves as a disguise for the expression of preferences, attempts to gain power, emotions and attitudes, but that it has ceased to have any relation to what is truly good or right. MacIntyre pins responsibility for the collapse of Western ethics on the Enlightenment. However, the Aristotelian alternative is not a simple return to Greek or medieval systems of thought. For the Enlightenment criticisms of scholasticism to be successfully answered, the return must be to a reformed Aristotelianism consonant with modern science. This means that the telos or end of man is not to be understood as determined by biology, rather it is to be fathomed by reflection on history, and the human practices and traditions that have evolved over the course of history. *Relativism* Like the Nietzschean critics of the arrogance of the

Enlightenment, MacIntyre accepts that there is no absolute standpoint from which we can arrive at absolute moral truths. Each of us must view the world from his own position in history and society. It is this admission that led many critics of *After Virtue* to accuse him of relativism or historicism, and it is largely in response to this criticism that *Whose Justice?* Rather, he holds that man has the ability to understand rival perspectives even when one cannot be translated into the idiom of the other. On the basis of this understanding, rational evaluation and judgment can be made with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the rival world views and ideologies. MacIntyre extends this discussion in *Whose Justice? Beyond ethics*, which was the focus of his attention in *After Virtue*, to the very principles of rationality, thus bringing the insights of his ethical thought to bear on epistemology. There are two major themes developed in *Whose Justice?* In contemporary Western thought, what are often considered to be principles of reason are those which have proven indispensable to the natural sciences and mathematics. Relativists have considered such controversies to be irresolvable. They claim that we are stuck inside our own world views, unable to make judgments on any of them. MacIntyre distinguishes two forms of relativism, which he terms relativist and perspectivalist. The relativist claims that there can be no rationality as such, but only rationality relative to the standards of some particular tradition. The perspectivalist claims that the central beliefs of a tradition are not to be considered as true or false, but as providing different, complementary perspectives for envisaging the realities about which they speak to us. MacIntyre argues that both the relativist and the perspectivalist are wrong. They are wrong because they fail to admit the absolute timeless character of the truth, and would replace truth by what is often called warranted assertibility. Instead of truth, they hold that the best we can attain is the right or warrant to assert various statements in various circumstances. To have passed through an epistemological crisis successfully enables the adherents of a tradition of enquiry to rewrite its history in a more insightful way and such a history of a particular tradition provides not only a way of identifying the continuities in virtue of which that tradition of enquiry has survived and flourished as one and the same tradition. But also of identifying more accurately that structure of justification which underpins whatever claims to truth are made within it, claims which are more and other than claims to warranted assertibility. And a claim that such and such is warrantably assertible always, therefore, has to make implicit or explicit references to such times and places. The concept of truth, however, is timeless. It is in this way that the people of Rome could come to accept Christianity, and the people of Iran, Islam. Each people saw that their own traditions had reached a point of crisis, a point at which further progress could only be made by the adoption of a new religion. Perhaps MacIntyre is reflecting here on his own brief membership in the Communist Party and subsequent rejection of Marxism and conversion to Catholicism. One who adopts an intellectual position must always ask himself if it can adequately respond to criticism, criticism which can mount to produce what may be termed an epistemological crisis. The relativist pretends to issue his challenge from a neutral ground where different traditions may be compared and truth may be proclaimed relative to each of them. But this is as much a claim to absolute truth as any other. This argument and others similar to it which are to be found in *Whose Justice?* Have provoked penetrating criticism. John Haldane has argued that one need not assume that there is some neutral ground from which to issue the relativist claim. One tradition of inquiry will be in a position to uphold the truth of its claims against rivals in which those claims are not recognized when it develops the intellectual apparatus to explain the rival viewpoint, and why the disagreement has arisen, and why the rival is incorrect. In other words, through intellectual conflict between traditions, a tradition can vindicate itself only when it can enrich its own conceptual resources sufficiently to explain the errors of its rivals. This kind of conflict and progress is only possible when there is a commitment to finding the truth. With relativism there can be no intellectual advancement, because there is no attempt made to adjudicate among different theoretical viewpoints, and without the attempt to reach a more comprehensive position in which truth and falsity can be distinguished, traditions cannot evolve rationally, nor can they maintain their previous truth claims. MacIntyre sees relativism as tempting those who despair of intellectual advancement, and for the sake of intellectual advancement, he sees it as a temptation that must be avoided. MacIntyre objects that the traditions really do conflict with one another, and the fact that they are rivals itself bears testimony to their substantive disagreements over what is true and false. The claim that there is no ultimate truth of the matter is really just a

way of avoiding the work that needs to be done in order to determine exactly where and in what respects in each of the rival traditions. The truth lies, and when the differences in the rivals is so deep that the very principles of rationality are called into question, the rivalry produces an epistemological crisis, but even here, the need and duty to provide a rational evaluation of the rivals remains. MacIntyre contends that epistemological crisis occurs when different traditions with different languages confront one another. Those who learn to think in both languages come to the understanding that there are things in one language for which the other does not have the expressive resources, and thereby they discover a flaw in the deficient tradition. In this way he shows how rational evaluation of different traditions is possible, although this evaluation itself must begin from within a specific tradition. The fantasy of universal standards of reason to which all rational beings must submit by virtue of being rational has been abandoned. The incommensurability of competing traditions, according to MacIntyre, is not as absolute as some have imagined. I had hoped that what I had said about truth in enquiry in Chapter 18 of *Whose Justice? Would have made it adequately clear that I regard any attempt to eliminate the notion of truth from that of enquiry as bound to fail. It is in part for this reason that I regard the Nietzschean tradition as always in danger of lapsing into fatal incoherence. The solution MacIntyre offers is one in which there is hope that the absolute truths of Islam can be rationally defended against opponents as certain, but only by developing the Islamic intellectual traditions to the point that they are able to explain the successes as well as the failures of their rivals. As Ronald Beiner observes what makes MacIntyre unique is that for him the problem is not merely individualism or liberalism but modernity as such. Therefore he includes even Marxism within the scope of his critique. Just as the relativist contradicts himself if he would proclaim the absolute truth of the proposition that there are no absolute truths, the liberal contradicts himself by proclaiming neutrality between all ideologies, when, in fact, liberalism itself is an ideology. Liberalism is an intellectual tradition as ideological as any other, and it allows for scholarly inquiry only after initiation into accepted modes of appraisal which deny the worth of serious challenges to liberalism itself. MacIntyre responds that liberalism is a defective and ultimately incoherent ideology. His insight into the defects of liberalism is one which was first expressed in his first book, *Marxism an Interpretation*, which was written when he was only twenty three years old. In the revised edition of this work MacIntyre emphasizes the need for an ideology on the scale of Christianity or Marxism that can offer an interpretation of human existence by means of which people can situate themselves in the world and direct their actions to ends that transcend their own immediate situations. He argues that liberalism is an ideology that cannot function effectively as such. Modernism inhibits orientation because from the point of view of modern liberalism, religious traditions seem irrational. The standards of rationality to which the religious traditions of enquiry appeal are so different from those which dominate the natural and social sciences in the West today that traditional and modernist ways of thinking have become nearly mutually incomprehensible. Nevertheless, a tradition may come to be rationally accepted by those who live within the horizons of Western liberal culture once they come to recognize themselves as imprisoned by a set of beliefs which lack justification in precisely the same way and to the same extent as do the positions which they reject but also to understand themselves as hitherto deprived of what tradition affords, as persons in part constituted as what they are up to this point by an absence, by what is from the standpoint of traditions an impoverishment. What the individual posited by liberal theory lacks is an effective ideology to provide understanding and purpose on the basis of which communities can be established. MacIntyre admits that this kind of recognition amounts to a sort of conversion. Individuals at the point of conversion will invite a tradition of enquiry to furnish them with a kind of self knowledge which they have not as yet possessed by first providing them with an awareness of the specific character of their own incoherence and then accounting for the particular character of this incoherence by its metaphysical, moral, and political scheme of classification and explanation. The liberal fantasy of universal progress implies that the most rational standards are those which dominate the most recent trends of its own thought. To the extent that Muslims are unwilling to adopt the standards of modernism, they are thought to be irrational. Islamic intellectual traditions are taken to be more or less the same as what the West progressed beyond when it abandoned medieval scholasticism. The caricature of Islam drawn by the liberal West requires neglect of the particularities of character, history, and circumstance. This makes it impossible to engage in the kind of*

rational dialogue which could move through argumentative evaluation to the rational acceptance or rejection of a tradition. Thus, the kind of debate which is enforced in the public forums of enquiry in modern liberal culture for the most part effectively precludes the voices of tradition outside liberalism from being heard. Since all the citizens of the liberal state are supposed to be free to pursue their own happiness, and since despite their differences about what ultimate happiness is, the vast majority seem to be in agreement on the idea that its pursuit is aided by ever increasing acquisition and consumption, which goes by the euphemism of economic development, It becomes nearly self evident that it is in the national interests of the liberal state to pursue economic development. That a systematically lower standard of living ought to be preferred to a systematically higher standard of living is a thought incompatible with either the economics or the politics of peculiarly modern societies. But a community which was guided by Aristotelian norms would not only have to view acquisitiveness as a vice but would have to set strict limits to growth insofar as that is necessary to preserve or enhance a distribution of goods according to desert.

Chapter 2 : Summary/Reviews: Whose justice? Which rationality? /

This is a review of _Whose Justice? Which Rationality?_ by Alasdair MacIntyre. This is a very challenging book to read, but also one that will deepen your thinking about the world, whether you agree with it or not.

Share via Email Jose Padilla is no hero. He chose to associate himself with an organization whose methods and aims violated international law and the domestic laws of most countries. But just as in cases where police failed to give arrestees their rights, Padilla should have been allowed to go free after the illegal, constitution-breaking and mentally murderous routine that the US government put him through. The jury missed the chance to send a message to the administration that there is a penalty for depriving citizens of their rights. Additionally, while editorialists intone solemnly that the court and the jury sent a message to the administration that they did not need to break the constitution to secure a conviction, no one should be happy at the looseness of conspiracy charges. The jury found Padilla and his two co-convicts, who seem to have had precious little contact with him, guilty of conspiracy to "murder, kidnap and maim individuals in a foreign country, conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists, and providing material support to terrorists. It is a cynical attempt to raise public hysteria. Murder or attempted murder charges are quite adequate - but they could not find a single case that the indicted were directly involved in. The US government did not produce a single charge against him to substantiate the years of publicity about his alleged "dirty bomb" plot. His application for al-Qaida training was enough to find him guilty by association of everything any other member of the organization ever did. This application of "six degrees of separation" is dangerous and could easily implicate Kevin Bacon despite his distinctly non-halal name. To put it in perspective, there should have been many more in that dock. Padilla was training with al-Qaida, which allied to the Taliban, who were financed, armed and supported by the Pakistani intelligence services, which was backed in its work by the CIA, and thus, one may presume, successive presidents. One can hardly blame the jury. It would have taken very strong-minded individuals to have overcome the social pressures that have put Muslims and Arabs, even US citizens, in a free fire zone. Even so, juries across the states have cavilled at such prejudiced charges, only to find the administration invents new charges to justify their persecution of the new pariahs. Nor is this just an American trait: Which really brings us back to the ghost at the feast in the trial? Where is Osama Bin Laden? The US government went into Afghanistan to get him, against the background of millions of "Most Wanted" fliers for the turbaned poster boy. Thousands of dead Americans and many more Iraqis later, an embarrassed White House hardly mentions Osama Bin Laden anymore and instead glories in a politically expedient Auto de Fe against Padilla that the Inquisition would have disowned. Bin Laden is a fugitive from justice, Padilla has not seem much justice at all. And the Bush administration sadly seems to face no prospect of it at all.

Chapter 3 : Whose Justice? Which Rationality? by Alasdair MacIntyre

Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, the sequel to *After Virtue*, is a persuasive argument of there not being rationality that is not the rationality of some tradition.. MacIntyre examines the problems presented by the existence of rival traditions of inquiry in the cases of four major philosophers: Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, an.

Politicians, reformers, administrators, appeal in a haphazard way to items in this deposit. Philosophers and social theorists toil away trying to make sense of it, but they cannot possibly succeed. The ruins are not even the ruins of one building, but the disordered remains of various ethical conceptions. These were, in their time, coherent: But now we have no coherent conceptions, and because we are trying to solve our social problems with those fragmentary ideas, we are doomed to endlessly inconclusive and conflicting arguments about questions of justice. With regard to distributive justice, for instance “the questions of how goods should rightfully be distributed in society” some conceptions insist on our asking whether it is fair that some people should enjoy markedly more advantages than others. Those ideas dispute the ground, not just in the journals but in politics, with the presently more successful notion that you are entitled to what you have got or can get, so long as you rightfully acquired it: Some philosophers see the disputes between such ideas as embodying two different views of society, which genuinely compete with each other and mobilise different ethical conceptions of property, justice and a social order. Those philosophers are also disposed to think that philosophical discussion, together with empirical knowledge, will contribute to making clear those views of society and help us to see how far they make sense. For MacIntyre, however, these discussions are simply a waste of time, since we have no tradition or coherent set of ethical conceptions by which they might be decided or even advanced. All we have is endless disagreement and the sway of power and political fortune. This hopeless lack of intellectual and ethical resources applies not only to questions about inequality of property, income and power, but just as much to other issues that touch on justice, such as the death penalty, abortion or affirmative action. His new book sustains the same theme. It is not a work of political philosophy, and indeed contains little philosophy of any kind. It is rather a study in intellectual history, exploring what MacIntyre sees as three different traditions of Western ethical thought: The studies of these various traditions fill out his general thesis with historical detail. The thesis has also become more ambitious than it was before. It is not only justice, but conceptions of practical reason itself “that is to say, of the processes by which, socially or personally, we work out what to do” that are relative to a tradition. The full text of this book review is only available to subscribers of the London Review of Books. You are not logged in If you have already registered please login here If you are using the site for the first time please register here If you would like access to the entire online archive subscribe here Institutions or university library users please login here.

Chapter 4 : Project MUSE - Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (review)

Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, the sequel to *After Virtue*, is a persuasive argument of there not being rationality that is not the rationality of some tradition. MacIntyre examines the problems.

The author, Alasdair MacIntyre, is one of the most profound and most controversial moralists and social thinkers of our time. The book, *Whose Justice? It requires some familiarity with various details of Western culture, in particular its moral and political philosophies. So, rather than merely summarize the work, I will try to show why I think it is important for Muslim thinkers to read and criticize it. Along the way I offer some humble criticisms of my own, and suggestions for further research. Of all those who have stood against the currents of modernism, Alasdair MacIntyre stands out as the philosopher who has offered the most profound critique. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, he has taught at Leeds University, University College, Oxford, the University of Essex, Boston University, Vanderbilt University and the University of Notre Dame, has written ten books, has edited important anthologies, and has authored about two hundred articles and book reviews. His *After virtue*, which was first published in , sent shock waves through the Western intellectual world. This rejection of modernist thinking was focused upon moral philosophy, but it attracted the attention of a readership much wider than what could be expected for a book in ethics. In the field of ethics, MacIntyre has spawned a revival of interest in Aristotelian ethics with such force that it is now generally recognized as serious rival to the two major strands of moral philosophy that have been dominant in the West since the Enlightenment: Numerous books and articles have been written since the publication of *after virtue* proclaiming the advantages of an Aristotelian virtue ethics over utilitarian consequentialism and Kantian deontology. It was largely in response to this sort of misunderstanding, subsequent to the publication of *after virtue*, that MacIntyre wrote the sequel, *Whose Justice?* So, one reason for reading MacIntyre is because his work has been tremendously influential, even among those who disagree with his positions. Another reason would be interest in the topics he discusses: For Muslims, however, there are additional reasons to read MacIntyre. One of the most important issues in Islamic social and political thought since the nineteenth century has been the confrontation of traditional Muslim societies with European modernism and one of the most important facets of modernism about which Muslim thinkers are concerned is that of political liberalism. Muslims who argue that liberal ideals and institutions are compatible with Islam are usually classified as modernists. At the other extreme are those who would claim that liberal and Islamic thought agree on nothing. The vast majority of Muslim intellectuals and scholars, however, fall somewhere between these extremes. The interesting discussion in contemporary Muslim social thought is not over whether modernists or conservatives hold a more defensible position, but what aspects of liberal thought may be accommodated and what aspects must be rejected. Furthermore, the philosophical perspective he seeks to defend, a form of Neo-Thomism with a strong emphasis on Aristotle, is more similar to the philosophical perspective of traditional Islamic thought than are any of the other major tendencies to be found among contemporary Western philosophers. Of course, there remain important differences between the attitudes of Muslims and those expressed by MacIntyre, to be discussed below, but regardless of our differences, the thought of the most profound critic of modernism and liberalism in the West should be of great interest to those who feel a need to resist the imposition of modernist and liberal thought on Muslim societies, such as those inspired by the warnings of the Grand Leader of the Islamic Revolution against the "cultural invasion". Muslim liberals who await a repetition of the European Enlightenment in Islamic culture would also be well advised to read MacIntyre, who has declared the Enlightenment project to be a failure and ultimately incoherent. Perhaps if Muslim modernists would read MacIntyre they would become more critical of the claims made on behalf of liberalism, and would come to recognize the need to examine the intellectual history of their own traditions, as well as those of the West, to find the way forward. *After Virtue* The book that initially provoked the great storm of controversy was *After virtue*, and in order to understand the true significance of *Whose Justice?* One must understand something about the earlier work. MacIntyre pins responsibility for the collapse of Western ethics on the Enlightenment. However, the Aristotelian alternative is not a simple return to Greek or medieval systems of thought. For the*

Enlightenment criticisms of scholasticism to be successfully answered, the return must be to a reformed Aristotelianism consonant with modern science. This means that the telos or end of man is not to be understood as determined by biology; rather it is to be fathomed by reflection on history, and the human practices and traditions that have evolved over the course of history. Relativism Like the Nietzschean critics of the arrogance of the Enlightenment, MacIntyre accepts that there is no absolute standpoint from which we can arrive at absolute moral truths. Each of us must view the world from his own position in history and society. It is this admission that led many critics of after virtue to accuse him of relativism or historicism, and it is largely in response to this criticism that *Whose Justice?* Unlike the Nietzscheans, or genealogists as MacIntyre refers to those often called post modernists, MacIntyre does not accept the claim that because we are bound to our finite perspectives conditioned by history and social position, we are barred from certainty or absolute truth. Rather, he holds that man has the ability to understand rival perspectives even when one cannot be translated into the idiom of the other. On the basis of this understanding, rational evaluation and judgment can be made with regard to the strengths and weaknesses of the rival worldviews and ideologies. MacIntyre extends this discussion in *Whose Justice? Beyond ethics*, which was the focus of his attention in after virtue, to the very principle of rationality, thus bringing the insight of his ethical thought to bear on epistemology. There are two major themes developed in *Whose Justice?* When two traditions of thought are so different that what is considered self-evident or obvious in one tradition is considered dubious or incomprehensible in the other, the very principles of reason come under question. In contemporary Western thought, what are often considered to be principles of reason are those that have proven indispensable to the natural sciences and mathematics. Relativists have considered such controversies to be irresolvable. They claim that we are stuck inside our own worldviews, unable to make judgments on any of them. MacIntyre distinguishes two forms of relativism, which he terms relativist and perspectivalist. The relativist claims that there can be no rationality as such, but only rationality relative to the standards of some particular tradition. The perspectivalist claims that the central beliefs of a tradition are not to be considered as true or false, but as providing different, complementary perspectives for envisaging the realities about which they speak to us. MacIntyre argues that both the relativist and the perspectivalist are wrong. They are wrong because they fail to admit the absolute timeless character of the truth, and would replace truth by what is often called warranted assertibility. To have passed through an epistemological crisis successfully enables the adherents of a tradition of enquiry to rewrite its history in a more insightful way. And such a history of a particular tradition provides not only a way of identifying the continuities in virtue of which that tradition of enquiry has survived and flourished as one and the same tradition, but also of identifying more accurately that structure of justification which underpins whatever claims to truth are made within it, claims which are more and other than claims to warranted assertibility. The concept of warranted assertibility always has application only at some particular time and place in respect of standards then prevailing at some particular stage in the development of a tradition of enquiry, and a claim that such and such is warranted assertible always, therefore, has to make implicit or explicit references to such times and places. The concept of truth, however, is timeless. It is in this way that the people of Rome could come to accept Christianity, and the people of Iran, Islam. Each people saw that their own traditions had reached a point of crises, a point at which further progress could only be made by the adoption of a new religion. Perhaps MacIntyre is reflecting here on his own brief membership in the Communist Party and subsequent rejection of Marxism and conversion to Catholicism. One who adopts an intellectual position must always ask himself if it can adequately respond to criticism, criticism that can mount to produce what may be termed an epistemological crisis. The relativist pretends to issue his challenge from a neutral ground where different traditions may be compared and truth may be proclaimed relative to each of them. But this is as much a claim to absolute truth as any other. This argument and others similar to it which are to be found in *Whose Justice?* Have provoked penetrating criticism. John Haldane has argued that one need not assume that there is some neutral ground from which to issue the relativist claim. Needs to be amended. At the same time, he points out that within every major intellectual tradition; various claims are presented about morals and rationality as absolutely true. The problem is then raised as to how this anti-relativistic commitment to truth can coexist with the recognition of rival intellectual traditions with their different standards of rationality and

morality. One tradition of inquiry will be in a position to uphold the truth of its claims against rivals in which those claims are not recognized when it develops the intellectual apparatus to explain the rival viewpoint, and why the disagreement has arisen, and why the rival is incorrect. In other words, through intellectual conflict between traditions, a tradition can vindicate itself only when it can enrich its own conceptual resources sufficiently to explain the errors of its rivals. This kind of conflict and progress is only possible when there is a commitment to finding the truth. With relativism there can be no intellectual advancement, because there is no attempt made to adjudicate among different theoretical viewpoints, and without the attempt to reach a more comprehensive position in which truth and falsity can be distinguished, traditions cannot evolve rationally, nor can they maintain their previous truth claims. MacIntyre sees relativism as tempting those who despair of intellectual advancement, and for the sake of intellectual advancement, he sees it as a temptation that must be avoided. MacIntyre dismisses the perspectivist position with the rebuff, "there is not so much a conclusion about truth as exclusion from it and thereby from rational debate. MacIntyre objects that the traditions really do conflict with one another, and the fact that they are rivals itself bears testimony to their substantive disagreements over what is true and false. The claim that there is no ultimate truth of the matter is really just a way of avoiding the work that needs to be done in order to determine exactly where and in what respects in each of the rival traditions the truth lies, and when the differences in the rivals is so deep that the very principles of rationality are called into question, the rivalry produces an epistemological crisis, but even here, the need and duty to provide a rational evaluation of the rivals remains. MacIntyre contends that epistemological crisis occurs when different traditions with different languages confront one another. Those who learn to think in both languages come to the understanding that there are things in one language for which the other does not have the expressive resources, and thereby they discover a flaw in the deficient tradition. In this way he shows how rational evaluation of different traditions is possible, although this evaluation itself must begin from within a specific tradition. His emphasis on the fact that the starting point of our inquiry is tradition bound is comparable to a common theme among writers in the hermeneutic tradition, such as Gadamer. The fantasy of universal standards of reason to which all rational beings must submit by virtue of being rational has been abandoned. The incommensurability of competing traditions, according to MacIntyre, is not as absolute as some have imagined. Logic retains authority, even if its principles are disputed, and what is sought is truth, and although he rejects correspondence theories of truth that would pair judgments to facts because he considers the concept of fact to be an invention of seventeenth century European thought, the theory of truth to which he gives his allegiance is still a correspondence theory. I had hoped that what I had said about truth in enquiry in Chapter 18 of *Whose Justice?* would have made it adequately clear that I regard any attempt to eliminate the notion of truth from that of enquiry as bound to fail. It is in part for this reason that I regard the Nietzschean tradition as always in danger of lapsing into fatal incoherence. The solution MacIntyre offers is one in which there is hope that the absolute truths of Islam can be rationally defended against opponents as certain, but only by developing the Islamic intellectual traditions to the point that they are able to explain the successes as well as the failures of their rivals. As Ronald Beiner observes: What makes MacIntyre unique? Is that for him the problem is not merely individualism or liberalism but modernity as such. Therefore he includes even Marxism within the scope of his critique. Just as the relativists contradict himself if he would proclaim the absolute truth of the proposition that there are no absolute truths, the liberal contradicts himself by proclaiming neutrality between all ideologies, when, in fact, liberalism itself is an ideology. Liberalism is an intellectual tradition as ideological as any other, and it allows for scholarly inquiry only after initiation into accepted modes of appraisal which deny the worth of serious challenges to liberalism itself. MacIntyre responds that liberalism is a defective and ultimately incoherent ideology. His insight into the defects of liberalism is one that was first expressed in his first book, *Marxism: An Interpretation*, which was written when he was only twenty-three years old. In the revised edition of this work MacIntyre emphasizes the need for an ideology on the scale of Christianity or Marxism that can offer an interpretation of human existence by means of which people can situate themselves in the world and direct their actions to ends that transcend their own immediate situations. He argues that liberalism is an ideology that cannot function effectively as such. The axis about which the failure of liberalism turns is its assertion of the fact! Modernism

inhibits orientation because from the point of view of modern liberalism, religious traditions seem irrational. The standards of rationality to which the religious traditions of enquiry appeal are so different from those which dominate the natural and social sciences in the West today that traditional and modernist ways of thinking have become nearly mutually incomprehensible. Nevertheless, a tradition may come to be rationally accepted by those who live within the horizons of Western liberal culture once they come to recognize themselves as imprisoned by a set of beliefs which lack justification in precisely the same way and to the same extent as do the positions which they reject but also to understand themselves as hitherto deprived of what tradition affords, as persons in part constituted as what they are up to this point by an absence, by what is from the standpoint of traditions an impoverishment. What the individual posited by liberal theory lacks is an effective ideology to provide understanding and purpose on the basis of which communities can be established.

Chapter 5 : Whose justice? Which rationality? | Opinion | The Guardian

Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, the sequel to *After Virtue*, is a persuasive argument of there not being rationality that is not the rationality of some tradition. MacIntyre examines the problems presented by the existence of rival traditions of inquiry in the cases of four major philosophers.

Additional Information In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content: University of Notre Dame Press, Although it is a sequel to *After Virtue*, *WhoseJustice?* Nonetheless, it is helpful to regard *WhoseJustice?* Its own conclusion is that now, on the basis of its arguments, a debate between liberalism and its rival traditions can begin. In his most brilliant chapter, MacIntyre attacks the liberal position by showing that it does indeed have its own conception of the good and that its toleration of rival conceptions of the good is severely limited. He claims that "contemporary analytic philosophers.. Liberalism has failed to provide rationally neutral and morally presuppositionless grounds for making moral judgments. In his most important chapter, "The Rationality of Traditions ," MacIntyre presents a theory of rationality which is arrived at by considering the three traditions whose histories he writes here. The first tradition has its origin in the conflicts of the ancient polis. These conflicts can be traced in part to the place of Homer in the life and culture of Athens. Radical disagreements arise over whether "the goods of effectiveness" or "the goods of excellence " should define the goals of the polis. The rhetoric of Pericles, the historical account of Thucydides, and the teachings of the Sophists all support the primacy of the goods of effectiveness in the life of the city. For Aristotle, membership in a polis is essential for the capacity to reason practically: And the fullness of the moral virtues is, in turn, impossible without practical rationality 97 " The polis exists primarily for the sake of the goods of excellence. This tradition, which reaches its ancient high point in Aristotle, proceeds to its culmination in Aquinas who develops the Aristotelian account of justice and practical rationality in a way "which escapes the limitations of the polis" 0o. Aquinas is also the culmination of the second tradition, the tradition that begins with Augustine and is developed by Gregory VII. The great achievement of Aquinas is that he "conceived it possible to bring together Aristotelian philosophy and Augustinian theology within a single scheme of thought" The third tradition reaches its culmination in seventeenth-century Scotland. It too has its sources in Aristotle and Augustine and it finds one of its expressions in Hutcheson, who sees "perfect agreement between scripture, rightly understood, and the conclusions of reason concerning the system of nature, rightly understood" 26 l. This third tradition is subverted by Hume, who believed himself to be giving an account of universal human nature and society when in fact he was merely providing a justification for the way of life of the eighteenth-century English land-owning class. You are not currently authenticated. View freely available titles:

Chapter 6 : Whose justice? Which rationality? - Alasdair MacIntyre - Google Books

Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, the sequel to *After Virtue*, is a persuasive argument of there not being rationality that is not the rationality of some tradition. MacIntyre examines the problems presented by the existence of rival traditions of inquiry in the cases of four major philosophers: Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, and Hume.

There are two common answers. The relativist says that all these questions concern fundamental moral values, and since they have no right or wrong answers, they cannot be rationally resolved by careful investigation of the arguments and evidence. The other common answer, that of the neutralist, is that consensus can be reached only when all parties to the dispute assume an impartial and neutral point of view. Alasdair MacIntyre, in *Whose Justice? The Enlightenment project*, however, has failed; no one has discovered a proposition, or set of propositions, on which all, or even the vast majority, of impartial observers would agree to found their philosophies. The failure to discover such propositions does not, in any strict sense, prove that there are none. Thus, it is possible for large segments of modernity to continue calling for impartiality and objectivity. To a growing number of thinkers in the West, however, such calls ring hollow. For them, a search which has gone on for almost three centuries with no positive results can mean only one thing: Impartiality and Objectivity are a chimera, and the search should be called off. Either way, the search which began with the Greeks for the one true and complete philosophy has ended in defeat. The proper way around the dilemma, argues MacIntyre, is for philosophers to acknowledge openly that the metaphysical systems which undergird conflicting ethical judgments are ultimately based on historical contingent traditions, each of which has its own social and institutional supports and, more important, its own criteria of truthfulness. Far from being opposed to reasoned reflection, in his view, traditions are the only possible foundation for reasoned reflection. But how can this be? If traditions are all tied to historically conditioned institutions, social practices, and authoritative texts, they must be based on the arbitrary outcome of historical causes. And is not it obvious that the rational and the arbitrary constitute two sides of an irreconcilable disjunction? At this stage, a tradition will either die or reformulate its positions, reinterpret its texts, and reevaluate its practices to overcome previous limitations. Two crucial points must be made. First, while a tradition is sometimes forced to reformulate its position as a result of contact with another tradition, it is essential to note that a tradition can never step outside of itself to evaluate the other tradition neutrally. Rather, it is by its own criteria of truthfulness that members of a tradition come to realize that another tradition has resources to handle some new situation better. Second, it is as traditions reformulate their previous positions that the notions of true and false become significant. The test for truth in the present, therefore, is always to summon up as many questions and as many objections of the greatest strength possible; what can be justifiably claimed as true is what has sufficiently withstood such dialectical questioning and framing of objections. Such a specific defense cannot The entire section is 2, words.

Chapter 7 : Whose Justice? Which Rationality?

MacIntyre extends this discussion in Whose Justice? Which Rationality? Which Rationality? Beyond ethics, which was the focus of his attention in After Virtue, to the very principles of rationality, thus bringing the insights of his ethical thought to bear on epistemology.

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Alasdair MacIntyre, in Whose Justice? Which Rationality?, argues against both of these answers. He traces the quest for complete objectivity to the Enlightenment's rejection of all arguments.

Chapter 9 : Whose Justice? Which Rationality? | work by MacIntyre | calendrierdelascience.com

Echoing the title of MacIntyre's critique of modern moral philosophy, this chapter considers whether in our postmodern liberal society we could ever agree what morality should govern our public actions.