Explaining and Evaluating Alasdair MacIntyre's Notion of Tradition-Constituted Rationalities and Justices

Ali Abedi Renani

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of
The Australian National University
June 2013

To Razieh, for all her patience and the time which I should have spent with her.

Statement

This thesis is solely the work of its author. No part of it has previously been submitted for any degree, or is currently being submitted for any other degree. To the best of my knowledge, any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used or consulted have been duly acknowledged.

Ali Abedi Renani

3

[Imam Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, the first Imam in Shia Islam, who ruled over the Islamic Caliphate from 656 to 661, writes in a letter to Maalik, his governor in Egypt, "Remember, Maalik, that amongst your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as you have; they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human beings are inclined to (*Nahjolbalagheh*, Letter No. 53).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Abstract:

This thesis is a study on the notion of practical rationality. Its main objective is to explore whether there is a shared way of reasoning in practical and moral issues between different cultures and traditions. For this purpose, I chose MacIntyre's notion of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality and justice (constitution thesis) as the key topic of the thesis, which holds there is no rationality and justice independent of a tradition. Rationality here is mainly practical rationality a most important outcome of which is the idea of justice.

We can understand MacIntyre's constitution thesis in contrast to Cartesian epistemology and Kant's moral philosophy as they are understood by him. The constitution thesis runs counter to Cartesian epistemology by its anti-epistemological tendencies; that is to say, we do not and cannot start our substantial intellectual enquiries based on some indubitable ideas whose evidence can be shown to any rational human being.

The constitution thesis runs also counter to Kantian moral philosophy by its opposition to providing a universalistic rule-based account of morality. The constitution thesis in this sense is related to virtue-ethics which emphasizes the importance of moral education and following moral masters for knowing moral duties.

I will argue that we can have an account of morality that does not depend on the notion of the final good; rather, it assumes basic facts about human beings, which include their basic and intellectual needs the failure to satisfy which damages their normal and desirable functioning. The mark of real needs is that their satisfaction sustains and improves our normal and desirable functioning, and this point lets us distinguish real needs from our acquired desires and expectations. This would be against MacIntyre's claim that the justification of morality requires the notion of the human good.

Table of Content

Abbreviations:

CT   Constitution Thesis (the idea of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality and justice)

EC   Epistemological Crisis

NE   The *Nicomachean Ethics*

ST   The *Summa Theologica*

Introduction

I have been drawn into MacIntyre's work, in particular into his idea of tradition-constituted rationality, from questions mostly related to religion and the philosophy of religion; questions concerning the language of religion, the attributes of God, the relation between modern ideas of human rights and religion, and the mechanisms for keeping religion, in particular Islam, abreast with the new requirements of modern social life.

Having been born into and grown up in a religious Muslim community, it was quite natural for me to face questions related to different aspects of religious thought; for instance, the question regarding the measures of the justice of God when He describes Himself as a just Creator who "does not do injustice to the weight of a grain" (Quran 4:40, Shakir Translation with modification). A question arises as to whether the measures of the justness of God are independent of His revelation and decree, or rather, are they derived from His word, such that we can know them using our own conventional and secular reason? A related question is whether there is a justification for human rights independent of particular traditions on the basis of which we can evaluate these traditions. If there is such an independent justification, what would be its relation to the particular ethics of those communities? If there is a conflict between international norms of human rights and the ethics of a community, which one should be given priority?

MacIntyre's notion of tradition-constituted rationality and justice seemed attractive to me, as due to his emphasis on the notion of tradition, I thought that this would be a good way of attending to questions like the ones mentioned above. I did my master's thesis on MacIntyre's critique of liberalism. At that stage, my understanding of him was that every tradition has its own measures of practical rationality and justice, and one tradition cannot legitimately impose its own measures on others. When I started my PhD thesis, as a result of a fuller engagement with his works, I gradually came to know that my earlier account of MacIntyre's ideas had been

inadequate. At that stage, I did not take into account MacIntyre's method for inter-traditional intellectual exchanges, and I did not appreciate that my earlier understanding would be open to the charge of relativism and perspectivism from which MacIntyre has distanced himself. Nevertheless, it was and still is difficult for me to understand how it is possible, on the one hand, to emphasize the relativity of practical rationality to traditions, and on the other hand, to hold that a tradition might acknowledge in certain circumstances the rational superiority of its rivals. This issue, I think, is the most difficult part of MacIntyre's work to understand.

To solve this issue, MacIntyre holds that the acknowledgement of the superiority of a rival tradition might take place on the basis of the internal measures of a tradition; in other words, the tradition might become refuted on the basis of its own measures of rationality. MacIntyre, thus, thinks this method is consistent with his idea of tradition-constituted rationality, and differentiates it from relativism. I will discuss in chapter 4 the inadequacy of this approach, and propose that there should be some substantial measures of rationality independent of all traditions if we seek to rebut relativism.

Another issue that occupied my mind, which I still think MacIntyre struggles to overcome, is an inconsistency immanent in his work, which issues from his Marxist background combined with his Thomism. Marx (1845) denies the existence of any inherent essence for human beings independent of their economic and social settings; whereas for Aquinas human beings are created in the image of God, in the sense that they have essences that require particular social relationships for flourishing. This inconsistency comes to the fore when MacIntyre denies the notion of the individual as a substantial moral notion independent of its social and cultural settings. If we take human beings as possessing an inherent essence or some capacities, this enjoins upon them some rights and responsibilities independently of their social roles, which are necessary for flourishing these capacities. These are issues that will be discussed later in the course of the thesis.

13

An interesting aspect of MacIntyre's thought is that though he is a critic of liberalism his theory has a strong democratic aura, which I think can be best described as a deliberative or participatory democracy in which people actively participate in discussions about the good and about policy-making. The relation of this democracy with MacIntyre's virtue-ethics deserves much attention. According to virtue-ethics, the virtuous have a privileged status regarding truth and practical rationality, which the unvirtuous are deprived of. This makes the relationship between the two an asymmetric one, because the apprentice should take as true things for which he is still not able to appreciate the justification, and so he would not be able to question the moral master in a way that he is required to do in modern democracy. The issues raised above are among the most interesting aspects of MacIntyre's thought to me, and which, excluding the democracy issue that I skip due to the confines of space, will be discussed in the following chapters.

My general approach in this thesis is to justify a basic minimal universal morality for all human beings *qua* human beings. I am not satisfied with MacIntyre's contention that all morality is the morality of a particular group (1994a, p.143). I will try to establish this minimal universal morality using a vulnerability approach, which addresses human basic needs related to the animal and intellectual aspects of human beings. My position is that these two aspects of human beings can serve to justify a morality without appealing to the notion of the human final good. This discussion is, in fact, my main contribution to the existing literature on MacIntyre.

My experience of living for some years in a secular country like Australia has also been effective in convincing me of the truth of this conclusion. Most of the values that are honoured in a religious community are also taken as such in a secular context. Truth-telling, promise-keeping, charity, respecting the rights of others, etc., are honoured and promoted in a secular context as well as in a religious one, and in some respects the former excels the latter. Nevertheless, there are many insights for the secular culture to learn from MacIntyre's work, one of which is to revise the

14

individualistic notion of autonomy according to which moral agents at a specific stage of their lives become morally and legally autonomous to the degree that their parents lack the legal authority to direct them. We can use MacIntyre's approach to introduce a virtue-informed notion of autonomy, which I take to entail that moral agents will or should become autonomous much later in their lives than we in a liberal context imagine. However, this should not be at the expense of holding that without a notion of the human good all systems of morality would lack rational justification. As will be explained in chapter 6, even if we cannot resolve all ethical disputes informed by the particularities of cultures, we can justify a wide range of moral norms based on what is required by the animal and intellectual aspects of human beings as rational beings. The needs that human beings have as animals to serve their basic needs such as security, hygiene, nourishment, and as rational beings to serve some higher goods such as self-respect, a right to justification, and participation in their social and political life can be the basis of a morality, which applies to human beings *qua* human beings.

This thesis consists of six chapters. In the first chapter, I will explain MacIntyre's account of tradition, and discuss what functions traditions play in his approach. In this chapter, I will point to MacIntyre's normative account of tradition under the rubric of traditions in an ideal sense.

In the second chapter, I will explain MacIntyre's notion of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality and justice. In this chapter, I will explain this notion based on the functions of traditions that are introduced in chapter 1. One major theme of this chapter is to show that MacIntyre is not a conservative advocate of traditions.

In the third chapter, the discussion shifts from the issue of rationality to that of truth, two notions that MacIntyre thinks are related to, but distinguished from each other. As MacIntyre has adopted Aquinas' account of the correspondence theory of truth, I have devoted this chapter to MacIntyre's interpretation of Aquinas' theory of truth, and to the consequences of this interpretation for MacIntyre's own theory.

The fourth chapter is about MacIntyre's theory of truth. In this chapter, I will compare MacIntyre's theory of truth and his notion of tradition-constituted rationality with relativism and perspectivism. I will also propose my own suggestions to strengthen MacIntyre's account against these charges along the lines that he needs to put more emphasis on the existence of some shared measures of rationality across traditions.

In the fifth chapter, I will follow up the results of the discussions in chapter 4. I will there argue whether MacIntyre's claim about the rational superiority of Thomism over its rivals holds on the basis of the internal measures of these rival traditions; which is an issue that MacIntyre has emphasized in his method based on epistemological crises. My view here is that this superiority is not internally acknowledged by these traditions, and that MacIntyre's meta-ethical positions regarding the objectivity of the good and the narrative unity account of intelligibility have moved him toward his conclusion.

In the final chapter, I will argue that these two meta-ethical positions are not required for morality as distinct from and an integral part of any reasonable ethics. In this chapter, I will introduce my vulnerability approach, which is based on the necessity of fulfilling human animality and intellectual needs as conditions for their normal and desirable functioning. This is, in fact, required by MacIntyre's espousal the natural law tradition.

In sum, the main questions that I shall try to address in this thesis include whether there is a practical rationality valid for different cultures, whether there are some norms and values attributable to all human beings *qua* human beings, and whether there is a way to justify a morality that does justice to both our similarities and diversities.

I have used male-language throughout the thesis in order to avoid making the sentences longer by bringing in, as does MacIntyre, "he or she" or "his or her". This, however, should not be interpreted as espousing masculinism. I also, as a Muslim student, will refer on some occasions, particularly in the final chapter, to some verses of Quran to answer the questions that were raised above regarding God and His justice.

16

I-Chapter 1: the Role of Traditions in MacIntyre's Works

I.1 Introduction

Any discussion of MacIntyre's views should pay due attention to his account of tradition. As the title of my thesis indicates, my main objectives are to investigate the relationship between tradition and practical rationality, the ways they interact with each other, whether there are norms of practical rationality independent of particular traditions, and whether in MacIntyre's view, there remains a way for inter-traditional appraisal, as opposed to relativism's claims; therefore, a clear understanding of MacIntyre's account of tradition paves the way for a better grasp of his ideas about practical rationality.

The notion of tradition is a pivotal one for MacIntyre. MacIntyre criticizes the individualistic understanding of the self and autonomy, which he thinks is central to Liberalism. The identity of the self, in MacIntyre's account, is formed through its relationships with others in its community, and the individual in order to achieve autonomy needs to learn from others and rely on his relationships with them to understand what his true good is (1999a, p.xi).

MacIntyre's espousal of the notion of tradition also reveals itself in his virtue-ethics. As will be explained in chapter 2, MacIntyre states that the individual in order to be able to understand the practical rationality of his obligations should at least to some degree possess the virtues upon which he seeks to reflect. In other words, individuals' characters precede the process of practical rationality, and these characters should be constituted in traditions in which notions of the common good and the good prevail. Accordingly, MacIntyre's opposition to the individualism of Liberalism can be summed up in his attitude toward tradition; however, we should note, as will be discussed below, that he does not defend tradition as such; rather, he

17

has a normative view of tradition, and defends traditions that follow the model of Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions. The reason for this will be explained in the present chapter. To this end, in what follows, I seek to explore what account of tradition MacIntyre has in mind, and what functions traditions play in his approach. The main aim of this chapter is to clarify MacIntyre's notion of tradition, and why he has a positive attitude toward the classical, Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions. In other words, as the main aim of my thesis is to explain MacIntyre's view concerning the relationship between traditions and practical rationality, as a first step I should clarify what he means by the notion of tradition, and how traditions can constitute practical rationalities.

I.2 MacIntyre's Application of the Term Tradition

MacIntyre has used the term tradition in different ways and with different attributes. A survey shows him using this term in the following contexts:

Catholic philosophical tradition (2009a, p.33)[1], tradition of the virtues (1981, p.xi), tradition of enquiry (1981, p.xii), moral tradition (1981, p.xii), long tradition of moral commentary (1981, p.25), dramatic tradition (1981, p.27), traditional societies (1981, p.33), traditional authority (1981, p.42), European tradition (1981, p.44), traditional Christian prohibition of suicide (1981, p.47), classical tradition (1981, p.58), Aristotelian tradition (1981, p.58), Thomistic tradition (1988a, p.403), traditional structure (1981, p.60), traditional morality (1981, p.62), traditional concept of justice (1981, p.70), sophistic tradition (1981, p.140), modern tradition (1981, p.233), scientific tradition (1990a, p.118), tradition of moral thought (1981, p.147), rational tradition (1981, p.147), medieval tradition (1981, p.167), Neoplatonic tradition (1981, p.175), corrupt traditions (1981, p.223), social and intellectual tradition (1988a, p.7), tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry (1988a, p.354), cultural tradition (1990a, p.228),

---

[1] For the sake of brevity, throughout the entire thesis, whenever the name of an author in parentheses is not mentioned, and is not preceded in the sentence before the parenthesis, the author is Alasdair MacIntyre, as in the above examples.

theological tradition (1988a, p.253), Scottish tradition (1988a, p.252), transformation of Liberalism into a tradition (1988a, ch.xvii), the Enlightenment tradition (1981, p.93), among the other applications of the term.

In my view, some of these applications seem to be in tension with one another. On the one hand, MacIntyre in *After Virtue* speaks of the classical and Aristotelian tradition, traditional morality, the Thomistic tradition, a traditional account of justification, tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rational enquiry and the like. In the same book, he represents modern individualistic Liberalism as containing fragments of the classical tradition (1981, p.111). These applications of the term tradition indicate MacIntyre's normative attitude, that is, modern morality is undergoing a crisis as a result of leaving behind the classical and Aristotelian tradition in which human beings were understood in terms of their social or natural functions or of their *telos* (1981, p.60). On the other hand, the list includes the application of the term tradition in cases, like the Enlightenment or Liberalism, of which MacIntyre has a negative opinion.

As the list above indicates, MacIntyre has also spoken of the Enlightenment tradition, modern tradition, scientific tradition and the transformation of Liberalism into a tradition. This is slightly strange, since he has also referred to the marginalization of the concept of tradition and the traditional mode of thought and of rational justification in the Enlightenment era (1981, ch.4); if so, how can he ascribe consistently the notion of tradition to Liberalism and Modernism?

To put this in another way, the reader of MacIntyre's works who reads *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* following *After Virtue* might find some inconsistencies in MacIntyre's use of the term tradition. One aspect of this incoherence, or seeming incoherence, taking into account the distinction I will make below between the general and ideal senses of tradition, is the following.

MacIntyre starts *After Virtue* with the contention that modern liberal morality is in a catastrophic situation, since it has lost the background in

19

which it used to find meaning and justification, and consequently degenerating into fragments wrenched from their context (1981, p.60). This is the overall idea of MacIntyre, covering the bulk of *After Virtue* as the predicament of modern morality. However, in chapter 17 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, entitled "Liberalism Transformed into a Tradition", he depicts Liberalism as a tradition with its own particular notions of the human good, rational justification and justice; while the idea expressed in *After Virtue* was that Liberalism has lost the classical and the functional concept of a human being (1981, pp.60-61), which logically should have the result that Liberalism lacks the capacity for any rational justification of its morality even in its own terms, rather than the idea that Liberalism is a particular tradition with its own measures of practical rationality and justice, a view that is upheld in chapter 17 of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* as stated above.

To resolve this problem, I suggest dividing MacIntyre's terminology of tradition into two groups as follows: 1-Tradition in a general sense, and 2-tradition in an ideal sense. By the general sense of tradition, I mean the view that there are different existing *de facto* traditions, each with its own norms and values, which impose some limitations on inter-traditional understanding and communication. By the ideal sense of tradition, I mean that different traditions do not enjoy equal resources and capacities to tackle their own problems, but some of them, due to their particular structures and resources, are more resourced to successfully pass an "epistemological crisis"[2], and to avoid sterility, as is the case with Thomism in MacIntyre's view (1990a, pp.146). As MacIntyre (2006d, p.111) puts it, some social settings only embody "distorted and fragmented or otherwise counterfeit versions" of practical and moral concepts; whereas, some others embody rationally adequate practical and moral concepts. The former type describes what I named as the general, and the latter type describes the ideal sense of traditions.

---

[2]This is a pivotal expression for MacIntyre, which will be explained in detail in chapter 4. It points to a state in which a tradition fails to progress and solve its problems using its own resources and by its own measures of rationality and progress.

On the basis of this distinction, in MacIntyre's view (1988a, p.345), Liberalism is a tradition, that is "the voice of a tradition", in the general sense with its own particular notion of the good and of justice; however, this tradition is not an ideal tradition, in the sense that its conceptual scheme is not rich enough to save it from sterility; a sterility that reveals itself through symptoms like the intractability of moral disputes within its frame. Thus, though there are different traditions each with its own notions of practical rationality and justice, some deserve more rational confidence of their proponents concerning their accounts of practical rationality and justice:

> Those who have thought their way through the topics of justice and practical rationality, from the standpoint constructed by and in the direction pointed out first by Aristotle and then by Aquinas, have every reason at least so far to hold that the rationality of their tradition has been confirmed in its encounters with other traditions... (1988a, pp.402-403).

Also:

> We still, in spite of the efforts of three centuries of moral philosophy and one of sociology, lack any coherent rationally defensible statement of a liberal individualist point of view; [while], on the other hand, the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments (1981, p.259).

The preceding remarks show that MacIntyre is not neutral toward different traditions; rather, he is, since writing *After Virtue* or even before that, oriented toward a kind of tradition exemplified in Aristotelianism and later in Thomism. This way of approaching MacIntyre lets us understand some difficult and complicated aspects of his view, including his distance from relativism and communitarianism, by offering a consistent picture of his theory. Accordingly, some applications of the term tradition mentioned above fall into the category of tradition in the general sense, like the Enlightenment tradition, the modern tradition, the liberal tradition, the philosophical tradition, the scientific tradition; and some belong to the category of tradition in the ideal sense, like the classical tradition, the

21

Aristotelian tradition, the tradition of the virtues and the like. In light of this distinction, a social or historical structure might embody a tradition in the general sense but not a tradition in the ideal sense. In the section, I will consider features of traditions in both general and ideal senses.

I.3 The Features of Traditions in MacIntyre's Work

After explaining the two different notions of tradition, it is worth considering what constitutes the two senses of tradition. According to the picture offered by MacIntyre, it is possible to summarize the features of a tradition in the general sense as follows.

I.3.1 The Features of Traditions in the General Sense

The first feature concerns the time-bound nature of tradition. A tradition is an accumulation of discussions and disputes on a single subject or related subjects through a relatively long period of time. When there are intractable and ongoing disputes, or there is a long history of commentary on a subject, a tradition of the subject would be formed, even if its content is contrary to the notion of tradition in the ideal sense. The quote below reveals this idea clearly.

> Liberalism, beginning as a repudiation of tradition in the name of abstract, universal principles of reason, turned itself into a politically embodied power, whose inability to bring its debates on the nature and context of those universal principles to a conclusion has had the unintended effect of transforming liberalism into a tradition (1988a, p.349).

As indicated above, the inconclusiveness of disputes within Liberalism has produced through time arguments and counter-arguments, which might be called a tradition of Liberalism, though a common feature of these arguments is their individualistic hostility to the notion of tradition in the ideal sense.

The second feature concerns the existence of some kind of similarity, continuity or core concepts in a tradition. There should be something constant in a tradition, joining its different and succeeding periods and parts

to characterize it as a single tradition. Based upon this description, what makes the Enlightenment or Liberalism a tradition is basic principle or principles emerging in different shapes through their history; otherwise and if the continuities or similarities were not distinguished enough, there would be traditions (plural) of Liberalism and the Enlightenment. Thus, when MacIntyre dismisses the neutrality of Liberalism, I take him to be saying that while Liberalism has the notion of neutrality as an ideal, throughout its history a somehow constant, specific and thus non-neutral view of the human good has accumulated in its different versions. This view of human nature and its good, *inter alia*, makes these versions counted as forming the tradition of Liberalism, even if a basic principle of Liberalism is the opposition to any notion of traditional mode of thought and authority.

The third feature of tradition in the general sense is that its assumptions may be unnoticed and unacknowledged. Those who are reasoning in the context of a given tradition are usually unaware of the presuppositions provided to them by the tradition. Contacts with other traditions might reveal to them these assumptions. For instance, in MacIntyre's terms, "Aristotle's importance therefore can only be specified in terms of a kind of tradition whose existence he himself did not and could not have acknowledged" (1981, p.147). Based upon these features, I think the following definition by MacIntyre holds for tradition in the general sense.

> A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretative debates…(1988a, p.12).

This account of tradition mainly applies to tradition as it has been used in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, which concerns largely traditions of intellectual and moral enquiry. In what follows, I will explain the features of tradition in the ideal sense in MacIntyre's view, and what conditions apply for a tradition in the general sense to qualify as a tradition in the ideal sense.

I.3.2 The Features of Traditions in the Ideal Sense

One feature of a tradition in the ideal sense, or as MacIntyre sometimes describes it, a tradition in good order, concerns its progressive and cumulative aspect. There certainly might be substantial agreements and disputes in a tradition, but in a well-ordered tradition, there is a progressive direction in arguments within the history of the tradition, as well as in the arguments between the tradition and its predecessors. The tradition in its relation to its predecessors moves toward making itself more adequate, and resolving the defects or epistemological crises that might have occurred to its predecessors and to itself. The lack of progress, in MacIntyre's view, is a sign of deficit of some kind in a tradition (1981, p.xiii).

Traditions, when they are progressive, are marked with some substantial agreements; thus, in MacIntyre's view (1981, pp.6-8), the insolvability of liberal moral arguments in cases like abortion and just war is a sign of the loss that has happened to this tradition; since the contending arguments are finally based on some incommensurable concepts like justice, human rights, equality, universalizability etc., such that proponents of arguments are unable to convince each other rationally; in other words, there is no encompassing concept like the notion of the good which can rank order these incommensurable measures. Therefore, though the aggregation of arguments and counter-arguments might construct a tradition, these arguments should have a progressive direction in order to develop widespread agreements to transcend the limits of past arguments, and not to remain in a state of epistemological crisis and intellectual sterility; so as MacIntyre (1981, pp.146-147) puts it, "when a tradition is in good order, when progress is taking place, there is always a certain cumulative element to a tradition".

Another feature of an ideal tradition, which pertains to moral traditions, is that it consists of agreements and arguments about the virtues and the good of its members; as MacIntyre puts it, "… when a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the

24

pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose" (1981, p.222).

According to this condition, Liberalism, unlike Aristotelianism, is not an ideal tradition, because it has, in MacIntyre's account, discarded any notion of the common good by the privatization of it:

> Allegiance to any particular conception of human good ought, on this liberal view, to be a matter of private individual preference and choice, and it is contrary to rationality to require of anyone that he or she should agree with anyone else in giving his or her allegiance to some particular view (1990b, p.346).

The importance of the notion of the good and an overall consensus upon it lies in that it gives integrity to a tradition; also, the notion of the common good provides a common basis for the rational justification of morality and for the intelligibility of actions.

In response to a possible objection that there are common moral norms in a liberal society, like the principle of respecting all people regardless of their notions of the good, which can terminate moral and practical tensions in the absence of the notion of the common good, MacIntyre would argue that our moral and political life is deeply affected by moral disagreements, and these disagreements are disguised and concealed by the invention of "an idiom of consensus with regard to values". In his view, there are conflicting accounts of the virtues, like the Aristotelian and the Humean ones, and so a public moral theory cannot be neutral between these alternatives, and yet be substantial enough to adjudicate moral and practical conflicts (1991a, p.5).

Having explained the different features of the general and ideal senses of tradition, I should also discuss different functions of traditions in MacIntyre's account. I here only briefly refer to these functions, and will discuss them fully in the next chapter. Ideal traditions, in fact, differ from general traditions as they serve these functions better that do other traditions. These functions include 1-providing consistent conceptual schemes, as is the case with Aristotelian and Thomistic morality in which the accounts of human nature, the human good and morality offer a

25

consistent conceptual scheme in which an objective rationality can be based on interactions between its elements, as will be explained in the next section in this chapter; **2**-traditions as a context for the definition and exercise of the virtues, which points to MacIntyre's virtue-ethics and the necessity of having virtues for practical rationality; **3**-the methodological function of traditions, which refers to MacIntyre's anti-epistemological account of first principles, that is, his view that we do not have access to these principles at the beginning of our enquiries and we should begin with our traditions' contingent starting-points in order to arrive later at more adequate accounts and finally at first principles of our enquiries. I will return to this issue in the next chapter.

Having explained MacIntyre's application of the term tradition, the ideal and general senses of traditions and their features, and traditions' functions, in the next section I shall discuss why the ideal sense of tradition for MacIntyre is best exemplified in the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions. This is because these traditions provide consistent conceptual schemes, promote the virtues and possess intellectual resources that enable them to pass epistemological crises.

I.4 The Structure of the Classical and Thomistic Moral Traditions and the Rational Justification of Morality

MacIntyre's appraisal of the classical and in particular the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions in part stems tacitly from an account of rationality that, in his view, can be provided best in the classical tradition.[3] MacIntyre has taken rationality in ethics as the ideal of objectivity; i.e. what is derivable from practical syllogisms independently of individuals' preferences. Objectivity here stands opposite to subjectivity which in turn means an idea is dependent on personal judgments.This objective derivation

---

[3] Also, as will be explained in this and forthcoming chapter, one reason behind MacIntyre's advocacy of Thomism as a tradition of intellectual and moral enquiry is that this tradition invokes dialectical and fallibilistic reasoning which MacIntyre thinks is necessary for attaining truth.

is possible in the Aristotelian tradition, due the existence of the notion of the human good in this tradition.

MacIntyre, thus, looks for a deductive kind of practical rationality. A cogent argument is deductive when the truth of its conclusion is the logical consequence of the premises, where they themselves are true. This picture of practical rationality is the opposite of emotivism which emphasizes the relativity of moral statements to subjective moral preferences, and denies the cognitive nature of moral propositions; that is to say, we cannot speak of the objective rightness or wrongness of these propositions.

MacIntyre (1988a, p.301) holds that for Hume, as a moral emotivist, passions are original existences, which means motivating passions are neither reasonable nor unreasonable; in other words, we cannot appeal to any criteria other than passions to deem them as reasonable or unreasonable. As opposed to this, in the classical tradition, internal goods of practices, narrative human life and tradition, in MacIntyre's social view as presented in *After Virtue*, can serve as objective measures independently of personal preferences to justify moral statements. These goods can serve as major premises of practical syllogisms, which in conjunction with minor premises yield a conclusion that is independent of our individual subjective preferences, and indeed corrects these preferences (1988a, p.129).

The independent nature of the results of the practical syllogism in the Aristotelian scheme is such that it does not leave any room for human free will to decide upon the action. According to the Aristotelian account of practical rationality, if there is enough knowledge of the good, and the agent is sufficiently virtuous, the conclusion would terminate in an action accordant with the results, without there being any place for the will to deliberate further; in this case, MacIntyre holds, "There is no logical space for something else to intervene: a decision, for example. For the fully rational agent, there is nothing remaining to be decided" (1988a, p.140).

The teleological view employed in Aristotelian ethics makes a conceptual scheme in which different parts fit together to provide an objective justification for ethics. This conceptual scheme consists of three

27

parts, i.e. an account of human-nature-as-it is, an account of human-nature-as-it should be, and an account of moral principles as what makes the transition from the former to the latter possible. In a tradition of virtue in the ideal sense, there is extensive agreement on human nature, the human good and the precepts of morality, which all refer to each other to make an intelligible scheme (1981, p.52).

The appeal to human nature here points to the existence of metaphysical elements in MacIntyre's social approach; but his metaphysical approach at this stage is overshadowed by his social teleology, which will be explained below, and is different from the natural law tradition he espouses later according to which every individual *qua* a human being has a potentiality to flourish through a life of virtue. It seems that at this social stage, human nature is what is constituted as a social identity in a tradition through the eyes of others, rather than in the image of God.

In this social teleology, individuals pursue their goods by subjecting their desires to the internal goods of practices, narratives and traditions. In what follows, I shall explain further, from MacIntyre's perspective, why the classical tradition has been able to provide this kind of rational justification for its morality.

This account of practical rationality, which consists in conclusions derived from the conjunction of major and minor premises, is also compatible with MacIntyre's dialectical account of rationality; as he writes, the rationality of a tradition "is in key and essential part a matter of the kind of progress which it makes through a number of well-defined types of stage" (1988a, p.354). The application of dialectic, as a method of constant questioning from contingent beliefs toward necessary truths, gradually improves our understanding of major and minor premises, which both concern respectively what our goods are and the particular situations that conduce to our good.

I.4.1 The Process of Practice–Narrative–Tradition

MacIntyre started out his criticism of the Enlightenment project and the modern liberal tradition by offering a social teleology in order to avoid what he then took to be untenable Aristotelian metaphysical and biological assumptions. By a social teleology, he had in mind firstly the view that we need the notion of the good in order to have an intelligible system of moral justification. Secondly, he used to think that this notion of the good should not be metaphysically Aristotelian, because there are elements in such a view which are not tenable, for instance, Aristotelian biological metaphysics or the Aristotelian view of the natural inferior position of women or slaves (2007, p.xi).

In order to avoid these indefensible views, MacIntyre introduced social goods, which are defined in turn in practices, in human life as a unified picture and in moral traditions. MacIntyre used this three-phase process as a context for the definition of the virtues and right actions. The first two phases are tentative locations for this definition, which needs to be articulated into the final phase, that is, a moral tradition. This social teleology paves the way for an objective justification of morality based on the internal goods of practices, narrative and traditions.

At this stage, MacIntyre was criticized on the grounds that his social teleology was open to the charge of formalism unless he provided this account with a substantial account of the good.[4] He later on accepted that he should base his moral theory on some metaphysical grounds, but insisted that his general view from *After Virtue* onwards would not be affected by this metaphysical turn (2007, p.xi; 2008, p.276).

MacIntyre's emphasis on continuity in his works indicates that I can still refer to the process of practices–narrative–tradition in his social teleology as an existing element of MacIntyre's current moral thought. What has happened is that his notion of the good in this process has become

---

[4] See for instance A. Gewirth (1984, p.43), W. K. Frankena (1983, p.586), D. Miller (1984, p.58), R. J. Wallace (1989, p.336) among others.

more metaphysical than it was before. This process in its social version runs as follows.

The first stage of the process is the practice. By a practice MacIntyre means "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized" (1981, p.187). According to this definition, MacIntyre identifies two related concepts: 1) standards of excellence and rules, and 2) the achievement of internal goods. A practice for MacIntyre is constituted by the achievement of internal goods which, in turn, determine some standards as the standards of excellence.

Internal goods are the main aims of practices. The characteristic of these goods is that "their achievement is a good for the whole community who participate in the practice"; by contrast, the characteristic of external goods is that the more someone has of them, the less remains for others (1981, p.190). Consider, for instance, the playing of chess as a practice whose final end is to strengthen one's mental power and the ability to think and manage strategically, or simply, to have some kind of entertainment and enjoyment. Some points are apposite as follows.

There is an internal good, here strategic thinking or fair entertainment, which constitutes the playing of chess. This concept is used to define the game's regulations. Ideally, it classifies actions that occur within the practice as right or wrong, allowed or disallowed. The achievement of this internal good is the main criterion for right actions in the play. The rules of chess, if they are supposed to be in the service of its original internal goods, should be formulated such that they secure those goods.

MacIntyre (1981, p.191) defines a virtue at this provisional stage as "an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods." This definition, MacIntyre asserts, is a tentative one and needs to be completed further.

There also are some external or peripheral goods acquired by the pursuit of the game, such as wealth, fame and pride, which in some cases are necessary for sustaining institutions that support a practice; but if these external goods replace the internal goods or are placed before them, the whole character of the game would degenerate fundamentally. Suppose that the dominant goal of a chess player is to achieve fame; in this case he can rig the game, if he is sure that the fraud will not be detected, without missing the good he has in mind. A better example is the invention of "nursery cannons"[5] in billiards, as a measure within the game's rules, which ruins the cooperative and competitive nature of the game for the sake of winning, unless a limitation is placed on the number that can be played consecutively.

The last point above indicates the possibility of the deviation of practices from their main internal goods. This deviation may be explained in terms of human beings' motivations and self-interest, or as a result of the gradual neglect of internal goods over the course of time. Accordingly, practices need some traits and characteristics on the part of those participating in them to avoid divergence, and to keep their own integrity. These traits, or the virtues in MacIntyre's terms like the virtues of justice, courage and honesty, prevent the participants from considering the practices as mere devices to achieve external goods (1981, p.191).

The common aspect of all these characteristics—justice, courage and honesty—which leads MacIntyre to describe them as "genuine virtues" is that they subordinate the participants in the practice to its internal good(s); all of these virtues require people to appeal to some impersonal criteria in their relationships and judgments (1981, p.192). In other words, the virtues serve as objective criteria to subordinate individual desires, and to direct them toward the good of practices; a view that is, in MacIntyre's account, at odds with moral emotivism according to which moral statements are simply the expression of personal preferences. Among the virtues that fulfill this

---

[5] I owe this example to Jeremy Shearmur, at the Australian National University, School of Philosophy.

function are the virtues of justice, truthfulness and courage. Without these virtues "practices cannot be sustained", because individual self-interest will prevail and degenerate practices which were based on some objective measures to realize their internal goods (1981, p.192). This subjection of desires to the virtues offers the objective account of practical rationality which I claimed MacIntyre is seeking for.

I should note here that MacIntyre's picture of the virtues defined in social terms has a restricted pluralistic sense; that is to say, though the virtues converge on having the function of managing and directing individual desires, there might be different versions of these virtues in different traditions; for instance, as MacIntyre notes:

> Lutheran pietists brought up their children to believe that one ought to tell the truth to everybody at all times, whatever the circumstances or consequences, and Kant was one of their children. Traditional Bantu parents brought up their children not to tell the truth to unknown strangers, since they believed that this could render the family vulnerable to witchcraft. In our culture many of us have been brought up not to tell the truth to elderly great-aunts who invite us to admire their new hats. But each of these codes embodies an acknowledgment of the virtue of truthfulness. So it is also with varying codes of justice and of courage (1981, pp.191-192).

In my view, MacIntyre here should have emphasized the restricted sense in which virtues vary between traditions. For instance, the inter-traditional variance regarding the virtue of truth-telling is limited to the exceptions to this general virtue, and does not concern the validity of this virtue. In other words, all moral traditions should value truthfulness, and they might partly differ only in terms of occasions on which lying is permitted. MacIntyre also agrees with this interpretation where he endorses Aquinas' view that the primary precepts of the natural law are valid across cultures, and only the secondary precepts which concern the implication of these primary precepts might vary (2009b, p.6).

So far, the notion of practice and its role in defining the virtues and vices have been explained. In passing, I need also to show how MacIntyre

maintains that this notion relates to the notions of narrative and tradition. MacIntyre has taken three strategies to justify the necessity for the merging of practices into a tradition that is informed by a unified picture of human life. The three strategies are as follows.

1-MacIntyre (1981, p.191) states that his account of the virtues in terms of practices could only be a partial and provisional account which needs something to complement it to preclude arbitrariness in practices. In his view, if different and incompatible practices are not put in a broader context, that is a unified human life, individuals will find themselves oscillating arbitrarily between practices; as a consequence, it may seem that practices finally derive their authority from subjective individual decisions, which runs contrary to the ideal of objectivity.

The claims of different practices might conflict with each other, putting the agent in a tragic conflict; a position in which the agent cannot understand or exercise different goods consistently. Thus, in MacIntyre's view, defining the virtues in terms of the internal goods of practices does not suffice to prevent clashes between the virtues of different practices. For instance, a chess player when he sees a child is drowning nearby faces a clash between the practice of chess, and the practice of swimming in order to save the child. Here the chess player needs to rank order the two practices to remove the clash, which requires the wider context of the human good.[6]

MacIntyre maintains that Aristotle, by putting the virtues in the context of a whole human life, was able to predicate them as good, and to disallow the possibility of moral tragic conflicts (1981, p.201); "both Plato and Aristotle treat conflict as an evil and Aristotle treats it as an eliminable evil" (1981, p.157). The elimination of conflicts for Aristotle occurs by locating them in a unified picture of human life with a final good, which can be used to adjudicate among conflicting goods.

---

[6] I, however, will argue in chapter 6 that the removal of conflicts in these cases does not require the final human good; instead, we can appeal to human basic goods for this purpose.

33

2-The second strategy is that the virtues such as justice and patience presuppose a hierarchical order of goods. Justice in an Aristotelian scheme is defined as giving each person his due or desert; so MacIntyre (1981, p.202) holds that "goods internal to practices need to be ordered and evaluated in some way if we are to assess relative deserts."

There are two equally intelligible ways of understanding MacIntyre's claim. The first is that some practices might have more than one internal good, so the assessment of individuals' deserts entails having a hierarchical order of the goods in order to evaluate what is truly their due. The second is that there are different practices with different internal goods the assessment of which needs to be based on a hierarchical order of these goods.

3-The third way in which MacIntyre attempts to articulate practices into the narrative of human life is by appeal to the virtue of constancy or integrity which is the virtue that, in his view, cannot be specified at all except with reference to the wholeness of a human life (1981, p.203). In other words, the notion of singleness of purpose as a basis for this virtue is only applicable in the context of a unified human life.[7] Accordingly, MacIntyre (1981, p.203) concludes that, unless there is a concept of a final *telos* that transcends the limited goods of practices, it will be both the case that (1) a certain subversive arbitrariness will invade a person's moral life, and (2) we shall be unable to specify the context of certain virtues adequately. The word that MacIntyre uses to describe the unity of human life is "narrative". A narrative possesses integrity with respect to its subject, such that its different episodes are connected to each other to convey a unified picture of the subject; the same MacIntyre suggests should be the case for a human life (1981, pp.218-219).

The notion of narrative which gives a unity to human life is also associated with MacIntyre's account of the intelligibility of actions. MacIntyre holds that the intelligibility of an action lies in its relation to the agent's antecedent states and actions. An action is different from a bodily

---

[7]I, however, think this argument begs the question of why we need such an account of singleness of life.

34

movement in that the latter requires causes for its explanation; while an action requires reasons that have relationships to the agent's wider narrative of life (1987b, pp.24-25). In chapter 6, I will criticize this account of intelligibility which requires a unified picture of human life.

MacIntyre so far has finished the second stage of the process of defining the virtues. Up to this point, he has located the virtues in the context of a good life for a human being, elevating it from the context of practices; thus he defines a virtue as follows:

> The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptation and distractions which we encounter and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good (1981, p.219).

MacIntyre continues to locate the virtues in the wider context of a moral tradition. He argues that to enter into a practice, "is to enter into a relationship with others not only with its contemporary practitioners, but also with those who preceded us in the practice, particularly those whose achievements extended the reach of the practice to its present point" (1981, p.194).

If we suppose that every person from the past to the present point has a unified life, which is a narrative, we admit that they have social and historical identities, and that their narratives are intertwined; "the narrative of any one life is part of an interlocking set of narratives" (1981, p.218). It is these interlocked narratives and the discussions about those narratives that make a tradition; a tradition that MacIntyre defines as follows, "A living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition" (1981, p.222).

As we have seen so far, MacIntyre in this social account has offered a three-phase definition of genuine virtues, that is, practice–narrative–moral

tradition, maintaining that a trait needs to meet all the three phases to be qualified as a virtue, "no human quality is to be accounted a virtue unless it satisfies the conditions specified at each of the three stages" (1981, p.275). The practice, thus, articulates into a tradition both in terms of the virtues that we need to regulate our relationships with other people in our tradition on the basis of the common good, and in terms of a rationality that is defined as a progress in a tradition as a form of enquiry, as was explained above regarding the methodological function of traditions.

In this section, after explaining the different functions of traditions, I discussed the structure of the classical moral tradition, which shed some light on why MacIntyre espouses this tradition. The main reason for MacIntyre's advocacy of the classical tradition, as a tradition in the ideal sense, consists in the kind of objectivity and narrative unity that this tradition bestows on moral life. Distinguishing goods into internal and external goods, and emphasizing the notions of the common good and the virtues for subordinating individual desires have made the classical tradition capable of providing an adequate account of morality, which can rationally justify its claims. In other words, the structure of Aristotelian and Thomistic morality, which is based on the notions of the common good and individuals' good, provides a convincing justification for individuals to subordinate their personal preferences to the good which is independent of their preferences. Also, the dichotomy between individual and the common good would cease to exist as a result of the ordering of the former to the latter (1998b, p.241). In the final chapter, I will, however, argue that the notions of the objectivity of the good and the narrative unity of life are not required for the morality and intelligibility of actions, and that the basic features of human beings as vulnerable and rational beings provide a platform for the rational justification of morality without the need for the notion of the human good.

I.5 The Dialectical and Fallibilistic Aspect in MacIntyre's defence of Aquinas' Thought

Besides the objectivity point mentioned above, there is another aspect to Thomism that explains MacIntyre's espousal of this tradition as a tradition of intellectual and moral enquiry; that is to say, this tradition exemplifies dialectical and fallibilistic reasoning that MacIntyre thinks is necessary for approaching the truth, as will be explained further in chapters 3 and 4. Thus, the ideal sense of tradition for MacIntyre is better presented in Thomism than in Augustinianism. The difference lies in the emphasis that MacIntyre places on the necessity of rational appraisal and constant openness to the revision and falsification of traditions, which can be seen in Aquinas' thought.

J. Porter (2003, p.62) argues that for MacIntyre the Augustinian account of moral enquiry which emphasizes the role of obedience to authority as a pre-rational condition for rational enquiries has not been superseded by Aquinas' synthesis. By Augustinian moral enquiry, Porter (2003, p.63) has in mind MacIntyre's reference to the "continuous authority" of masters; as MacIntyre puts it:

> So continuous authority receives its justification as indispensable to a continuing progress, the narrative of which we first learned how to recount from that authority and the truth of which is confirmed by our own further progress, including that progress made by means of dialectical enquiry. The practice of specifically Augustinian dialectic and the belief of the Augustinian dialectician that this practice is a movement towards a truth never as yet wholly grasped thus presupposes the guidance of authority (1990a, pp.92-93).

MacIntyre's espousal of authority culminates, Porter (2003, p.63) observes, in the way he espouses the acceptance of the verdict of the church by Peter Abelard regarding his heresy (1990a, p.91). Nevertheless, I think Porter's point with regard to MacIntyre's continuous approval of Augustinian authority is flawed and at odds with MacIntyre's major themes regarding the rational superiority of Thomism over Aristotelianism and

Augustinianism, and also with his fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas to be explained in chapters 3 and 4.

MacIntyre, in the quote above, narrates the acknowledgement of the heresy charge by Abelard from an Augustinian perspective, and is not stating his own point of view (1990a, p.91). From the Augustinian perspective quoted above, the authority of genuine masters is unchallenged; otherwise, pride that is the origin of all sins appears. For Augustine pride is affiliated with vices (see *City of God,* xix.25).

There are many reasons to think that MacIntyre's account of authority is not purely Augustinian, and that it is mixed with Thomistic inclinations. MacIntyre's account of virtue-ethics, which will be explained in the next chapter, reflects most of the Augustinian elements regarding the necessity of obedience to moral masters in order to become virtuous and practically rational. These Augustinian elements, however, are mixed with MacIntyre's emphasis on the necessity of rational appraisal, and with his fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas' thought (2006f, p.163). This mixture is not totally devoid of tensions, as it is not clear, for instance, to what extent the authority of moral masters is or should be open to evaluation.

MacIntyre (1991a, p.64) holds that standards of achievement in any craft or practice are justified historically through the criticism of their predecessors by transcending past limitations. This view is different from the continuing authority of a master in terms of which MacIntyre described Augustine's view. Accordingly, though there is surely an element of authority and apprenticeship in MacIntyre's virtue-ethics, his dialectical method approaches more Aquinas' view than Augustine's. This is an area in which MacIntyre thinks Aquinas has transcended Augustine's view regarding the incompatibility of faith and reason (2009a, pp.74-75).After explaining MacIntyre's social teleology, and why this method is applauded by him, that is, his account of rational justification as providing objectivity, I shall discuss MacIntyre's reasons for turning to a metaphysical teleology, and explain what new contributions this shift can bring about for him.

I.6 MacIntyre's Turn to Metaphysical Account of the Good

The main reason for MacIntyre's turn to a metaphysical account of the virtues and the good is that this account saves MacIntyre's approach from the charge of formalism; that is to say, the metaphysical account renders his social teleology substantial, as a position that can reject some traits as vices, though they are functional to a practice or a tradition. Let me begin with some explanation regarding why this social approach might lead to formalism.

Some critics have pointed to the indeterminacy of MacIntyre's social approach to the virtues; i.e. they argue his position consists only of some procedures which are indeterminate regarding the content of the virtues. A.Gewirth (1984, p.43), W. K. Frankena (1983, p.586), D. Miller (1984, p.58), R. J. Wallace (1989, p.336) among others have, on similar grounds, charged MacIntyre's initial social theory with formalism; for instance, Gewirth (1984, p.43) maintains that MacIntyre's definition of the good in terms of living best a unitary life does not differ from Kantian universalism which MacIntyre has rejected as being formal. By formalism here is meant that a method does not offer substantial criteria for its subjects, and that it only specifies some procedures that might equally apply to conflicting subjects. To explain the charge of formalism against MacIntyre, I shall explain his definition of the good life based on his social approach as follows.

> The good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is (1981, p.219).

This definition covers MacIntyre's social approach up to the stage of narratives. He then continues to complete this definition as follows, which covers the full stage of practice–narrative–tradition:

> I am never able to seek for the good or exercise the virtues only *qua* individual. This is partly because *what it is to live the good life concretely varies from circumstance to circumstance* even when it is one and the same conception

39

of the good life and one and the same set of virtues which are being embodied in a human life. What the good life is for a fifth-century Athenian general will not be the same as what it was for a medieval nun or a seventeenth-century farmer (1981, p.220). [Italics added]

Clearly, defining the good in terms of seeking the good life is not substantially informative about the content of the good, unless we notice the latent Aristotelian-Thomistic inclination in this definition. The kind of the good and internal goods MacIntyre has in mind is Aristotelian, which for example, excludes the unlimited greed for wealth as a genuine good. As Aristotle (*Politics*, I, 8-9) writes about two different senses of wealth-accumulation, the good life sets some limits on the accumulation of wealth. Since MacIntyre's notion of the good in social terms does not have adequate content, which is clear in his statement that "The good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man", I think he cannot at this stage as a result of this formalism dismiss evil practices as genuine practices, because evil practices might have their own internal goods which satisfy MacIntyre's social approach outlined above. His model of the good life does not have a clear content either, without considering his Aristotelian and Thomistic background, as is clear in his saying that "the good life is for a fifth-century Athenian general will not be the same as what it was for a medieval nun or a seventeenth-century farmer" (1981, p.220).Based on this, I disagree with C. S. Lutz (2004, p.98) where he defends MacIntyre's position on evil practices on the grounds that evil practices like running a slave labour camp cannot be a genuine practice because "there is nothing internal to that activity that can motivate a person to engage in it":

> Even the perverse pleasure one might take in dominating other people cannot be accounted an internal good, since it may be achieved by so many other sinister means. Some vicious people may be drawn to such activity merely for prestige, or for the pleasure of power, but these "goods" are external to the actual exercise of running a slave labor camp (Lutz 2004, p.98).

40

The problem with Lutz's view is that the way we define "sinister means" or "vicious people" as negative features, or define some ends such as prestige as external goods depends on our presupposed values. This social method cannot simply rule out some ends as external goods without involving those background values. Nothing can bar us from taking the pleasure of power as an internal good in MacIntyre's definition, unless we have some firm foundations to think otherwise; foundations which cannot be justified by the social approach, as we can imagine a community in which the practice of torturing is prevalent and is not dysfunctional to keeping that oppressive community running.[8]

This social approach is, indeed, more formalist than Kant's method of the categorical imperative. I can use Kant's notion to hold that enslaving others involves using them as instruments to my ends or not treating humanity as an end in itself. Kant's method is more substantial than MacIntyre's, since it is based on the notion of human dignity; as A. Wood (2002, p.13) puts it:

> In Kant's theory, of course such a [rational] principle is a categorical imperative and *the corresponding end or value is the dignity of humanity*. This is not a relative end to be brought about—a not yet existing object to be pursued just because we desire it. It is something already existing that is an end in the sense that we are to act for the sake of its worth, which is to be respected in all our actions. [Italics added]

---

[8] C. S. Lutz (2013) has responded to me in a personal communication as follows. "German National Socialists who ran slave labor camps in German occupied Poland during WWII did not become better human beings through their management of those camps; they became hardened against concern for the needs of their laborers. The defects of character that would enable a person to run a slave labor camp efficiently would not function as excellences in the second stage of Macintyre's virtue definition in AV, and would disable the critical responsibility for one's social setting demanded by the third stage of the definition".
I completely agree with Lutz that the Nazi officers did not become better human beings by running labor camps, as they did not respect the needs and dignity of a group of human beings; however, I think this moral judgment is not derived solely from MacIntyre's definition of practices at any of its levels independent of what we substantially and normatively think about human beings and their needs. MacIntyre's definition of the good life as "the life spent in seeking for the good life for man" *per se* does not yield such a normative judgment, unless we have a picture of the true human life in the background, which is responsive to human needs and dignity]

The criticism of MacIntyre's social theory of the virtues as being formalist resembles the same charge levelled by MacIntyre himself against Kant's notion of the categorical imperative:

> I can without any inconsistency whatsoever flout it [the categorical imperative]; "Let everyone except me be treated as a means" may be immoral, but it is not inconsistent and there is not even any inconsistency in willing a universe of egotists all of whom live by this maxim (1981, p.46).

MacIntyre is here referring to the first formulation of the categorical imperative based on the universalizability of the maxims of our actions as the condition of their morality. In his view, in a world of egoists the instrumental treatment of others can consistently become a universal code of conduct.

With regard to MacIntyre's own social theory, by the same token, we can imagine a world of egotists for whom evil practices contain internal goods, and also can form narratives and traditions based on some norms that are in the service of their tradition, and thus would count as virtues and yet are different from what we take to be the virtues; accordingly, MacIntyre's social method is formal, and indeed more formal than Kant's method.

MacIntyre later on admits the charge of formalism and the need for supplementing his social theory with metaphysical grounds regarding human nature and human flourishing; as he writes:

> But I had now learned from Aquinas that my attempt to provide an account of the human good purely in social terms, in terms of practices, traditions, and the narrative unity of human lives, was bound to be inadequate until I had provided it with a metaphysical grounding. It is only because human beings have an end towards which they are directed by reason of their specific nature, that practices, traditions, and the like are able to function as they do (2007, pp.x-xi).

There are two related strands to MacIntyre's metaphysical approach; one is his metaphysical view of the natural law tradition and the second is his view of human vulnerability, which will be explained below.

42

I.6.1 MacIntyre's Metaphysical Account Based on the Notion of the Human Good

The natural law tradition generally stands opposed to legal positivism according to which the issue of legality is a separate issue from the issue of morality. What makes a law, according to legal positivism, is some kind of authority and sovereignty behind the law. By contrast, according to the natural law tradition questions about legality are related to questions about morality, in the sense that no rule can legitimately be a law unless it conforms to some degree to the precepts of the natural law such as justice (2000, p.96). The natural law follows Aristotle's distinction between natural and conventional justice the former of which is independent of what counts as just in different cities, and is related to facts about human nature which do not vary from city to city (2000, p.96).

According to MacIntyre, the necessary features of a Thomistic version of the natural law are as follows. The first is that knowledge of the precepts of the natural law is accessible to all plain persons, who have not received specialized training in law or ethics. Plain persons, in this view, do not need to refer to lawyers for this knowledge. They have the capacity within themselves to understand the content of this law; the lawyers and the professors of law should learn the content from these plain persons in so far as they remain plain persons, unless plain persons are corrupted in certain social circumstances (2000, p.92).

The second feature of the Thomistic natural law is that it can secure widespread, if not universal, rational consent of rational human beings. The way to discover the precepts of the natural law in MacIntyre's view, following the French Catholic philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), is to reflect on ourselves as rational human beings to see what precepts we need if we want to function normally (2000, p.108). In MacIntyre's terms, we should enquire of ourselves what my good and our common good are if we want to function normally (2000, p.109). The result of this investigation is that we cannot function normally if we do not value norms such as truthfulness, justice, non-violence, respect for others' lives and property,

43

etc. (2000, p.110). Although MacIntyre here refers to the notion of human beings' normal functioning in the articulation of his natural law tradition, he also brings in the notion of the human good and *telos* (1981, p.52), which goes beyond the idea of normal functioning, as the final justification of morality, which I think as will be discussed in chapter 6 poses problems for his view in conditions in which we lack agreement on this notion.

This view of the precepts of the natural law is metaphysical, because it is based on facts about nature and human nature. The fact that nature's resources are limited, and our own human resources and strength are more and less equal leads us to the view that if we are supposed to function normally and move toward our individual and common good we should abide by these precepts of the natural law (2000, p.109). These precepts should govern our individual choices to order our individual desires and move us toward the good; otherwise, the result would be "the culture of advanced modernity" in which the individual is the centre of moral life, and chooses what principles should rule over him (1983b, p.9). By contrast, from the Thomistic perspective, the precepts of the natural law should be discovered and not chosen (2000, p.112).

MacIntyre's metaphysical view of natural law is different from other Thomistic non-metaphysical views such as John Finnis' and Germain Grisez's. The non-metaphysical views do not derive the oughts of the natural law from the facts of human nature, yet they do not deny that the observance of these precepts fulfills human nature. Our knowledge of "the basic goods", according to this view, does not derive from our knowledge about human nature; rather, we know them by reflection on ourselves and others, on our experiences and the findings of anthropology and psychology (2000, p.106).

MacIntyre (2000, p.106), by contrast, believes that this theory of the natural law needs resources from Aquinas's account of human nature, which is a revised and unified Aristotelian view of human nature; the very position he earlier rejected as "metaphysical biology". Based on the facts of human nature—that we are rational human beings, we have some natural end to

44

achieve, and that we are by nature vulnerable to natural threats and the threats posed by other human beings—we need to obey the precepts of the natural law.[9]

This view of the natural law, in addition to having some metaphysical foundation, in MacIntyre's view, has the advantage over modern theories of the natural law that it is capable of explaining its widespread rejection in modern culture; as he points out, "if the Thomist's view of natural law is true, we should expect that under certain types of circumstance it will be widely rejected" (2000, p.108).

As was noted above, a feature of the natural law is that it posits plain persons as those who possess knowledge of the precepts of the natural law; so in MacIntyre's account (2000, p.94), it is at first sight paradoxical to see that the more a version of the theory of the natural law approaches to the truth, the less likely it is to be accepted by modern persons. However, MacIntyre contends, Thomism has sufficient resources to explain this rejection as follows. According to Thomism, MacIntyre (2000, p.111) holds, individuals as a result of "mischance" or certain social circumstances, like the culture of advanced modernity, might not have the opportunity to develop their knowledge of the good and the common good; therefore, they lack the knowledge of how to order their individual desires and how to govern their choices; as MacIntyre (2000, p.108) writes:

> An Aristotelian Thomism has implicit within it a theory of moral and legal error, a theory that explains why what is at one level evident to every plain person may nonetheless be expected to be ignored or flouted by significant numbers of those same plain persons, let alone by legal theorists and moral philosophers.

---

[9] A question that arises here is whether this metaphysical explanation can sooth MacIntyre's concerns about Aristotle's metaphysical biology such as the natural inferiority of slaves and women. In my view, not all metaphysical explanations necessarily face these problems. These untenable views are not essential part of all metaphysical explanations or indeed of Aristotle's own metaphysical view; rather, they stem from Aristotle's own or his age's convictions. Instead, the problem for MacIntyre's metaphysical view concerns how we can acquire in secular terms a shared account of the human good and flourishing. To solve this problem, I propose basing our moral theory on the notion of human normal functioning, which is very much easier to agree upon, and to remove the notion of *telos* from the idea of human flourishing. My vulnerability approach in the final chapter is based on this view.

As Aquinas (*ST*, I-II, Question 93, Article 6) holds in this respect, "The natural inclination to virtue is corrupted by vicious habits, and, moreover, the natural knowledge of good is darkened by passions and habits of sin."

In modern conditions, as a result of forgetting that the self becomes a self through its communal relationships in family, social and political community, individual choice has become "morally sovereign", while the individual lacks any rational method to choose between different options (1983b, p.9; 2000, p.111). Any Thomistic version of the natural law in this culture is regarded as inimical to liberty (2000, p.112). In the final chapter, I will explain further MacIntyre's metaphysical account of the human good, which is based on a view of human beings as having essences that will be realized as a result of the observance of the precepts of the natural law. I there will argue that we do not need such a notion for the justification of morality as distinct from ethics, the former of which has a more universalistic aspect than the latter, as it deals with basic human goods and not necessarily with the final good.

After explaining MacIntyre's view of the natural law, I now attend to the second strand to his metaphysical view, that is, his view of human vulnerability and the virtues that this vulnerability demands. This view is indispensable to MacIntyre's account of the natural law, as it is about the facts of human nature. This account is also similar to my vulnerability approach which will be explained in the final chapter.

I.6.2 MacIntyre's Metaphysical Account Regarding the Essential Vulnerability of Human Beings

MacIntyre, using a biological approach, emphasizes the vulnerability of human beings and their dependence on each other as a way to justify his particular Thomistic ethics. In MacIntyre's view, one way in which Aquinas has completed Aristotle's ethics is by pointing to the vulnerability/dependence aspect of human beings, and by amending

Aristotle's account of morality accordingly. MacIntyre states the point as follows:

> I was first struck by this [the role of vulnerability of human beings in Aquinas' ethics] when reading a prayer composed by Aquinas in which he asks God to grant that he may happily share with those in need what he has, while humbly asking for what he needs from those who have, a prayer that in effect, although not by Aquinas' own intention, asks that we may not share some of the attitudes of Aristotle's *megalopsychos*. This led me to reflect upon how Aquinas's account of the virtues not only supplements, but also corrects Aristotle's to a significantly greater extent than I had realized (1999a, p.xi).

MacIntyre here underlies the animal aspect of human nature in respect of which human beings are essentially dependent on each other. He then tries to outline the virtues and the kind of social structures and relationships, i.e. apprenticeship and parental relationships, that are necessary for moving human beings, through this mutual dependence relationships, to the state of independent practical reasoners; a state in which agents move from merely having reasons for actions to the ability to evaluate those reasons (1999a, pp.71-72); however, we should note that this state of independent practical reasoning does not deny human beings' essential vulnerability, which applies to all stages of human beings' lives, but is most obvious in early childhood and old age (1999a, p.1). The state of independent practical reasoning, thus, is a normative capacity to form and have our own practical reasons on the basis of what our good is.

According to this biological approach, human beings as vulnerable and dependent beings need to have "the virtues of acknowledged dependence". This view of human vulnerability is a contribution made by Aquinas, which is clear in the quote above, to Aristotle's ethics in which, MacIntyre (1999a, p.127) maintains, there is "an illusion of self-sufficiency" with regard to the noble man—*megalopsychos*. The noble man is "ashamed to receive benefits … he is forgetful of what he has received, but remembers what he has given (*N. E* 1124b, pp.12-18, cited in MacIntyre (1999a, pp.7&127)). This illusion, MacIntyre holds, excludes the rich and the powerful from

47

communal relationships. By contrast, in MacIntyre's Thomistic view, the virtues of receiving are necessary as much as the virtues of giving to sustain communal relationships in which people depend mutually on each other (1999a, p.127).

Based on this approach, MacIntyre (1999a, p.124) refers to some virtues as the virtues of giving such as "*misericordia*" which means mercy and showing "grief or sorrow over someone else's distress as one's own", the virtue of just generosity which leads us not to act calculatively, by transcending strict proportionalities in our interactions. There are also virtues of receiving such as expressing gratitude, courtesy toward graceless givers, and forbearance toward the inadequate giver. The exercise of these virtues requires "a truthful acknowledgment of dependence" (1999a, pp.126-127).

Individuals as dependent and vulnerable beings, if they participate in communal relationships that are governed by the virtues of giving and receiving, move gradually from the state of being dependent practical reasoners to independent practical reasoners. Through these relationships they acquire a gradually more complete understanding of the good by learning to distinguish between the relations that are conducive to the good from the relations that are impediments to it. Through practical experience, individuals acquire "an adequate and reflective grasp of what human flourishing is" (1999a, p.113); they then can use this notion of the good in their own premises of practical reasoning.

The discussion in this section illustrates MacIntyre's move from a social moral teleology to a more metaphysical one which centres on some facts about human beings' nature. This move gives more content to his moral theory than does his social theory. As his view is based on some undeniable facts of human nature such as its weakness and vulnerability, it forms a firm basis for the definition of at least a minimal list of the virtues and vices. If we are naturally weak, or natural resources are limited, it follows that we cannot value theft or usurpation, because these codes of conduct would impede our normal functioning. This view approaches

Hobbes' account of morality as a human beings' invention to save themselves from the insecurities of the state of nature. I have much sympathy with MacIntyre's view of human vulnerability in his metaphysical approach; nevertheless, I will argue in chapter 6 for a vulnerability approach that is not necessarily associated with a notion of the final human good, in order to show that modern morality can be corrected without the need for the Aristotelian and Thomistic moral resources. Also, I will there discuss that MacIntyre's objection to the idea of human rights runs counter to his own vulnerability approach, as the protection of human beings against vulnerability requires appeal to some rights for human beings *qua* human beings.

I.7 Investigating the Consistency in MacIntyre's Thought Concerning his Account of the Natural Law Tradition

An interesting feature of MacIntyre's metaphysical moral theory is its universalistic aspect which seems to conflict with his criticism of the Enlightenment. MacIntyre (1981, p.45) started criticizing the Enlightenment project in morality concerning its attempt to formulate a universal pattern of rationality and practical reasoning independent of traditions. Now MacIntyre in his alternative based on the natural law tradition appeals to the notions of human essence and the precepts of the natural law which are universal.

In MacIntyre's view, the biological features of human beings are not sufficient to make a human being independent of the influence of cultures (1981, p.161). But MacIntyre here in his metaphysical approach is employing the facts of human nature as the bases of morality. These facts, as they belong to human beings *qua* human beings, might seem not to leave much room for the effects of variable intellectual and moral traditions on practical rationality. One way to tackle this problem is by holding that these facts constitute a minimum of morality which holds true in all traditions and in different accounts of ethics. By this line of reasoning, which I will elaborate in chapter 6, we can accommodate both the elements of the universality and those of the locality.In other words, I assume MacIntyre

thinks that vulnerability is a universal feature of human beings, irrespective of their other different attributes constituted in different traditions, and this leaves much room for the kind of cultural differences that MacIntyre emphasizes, and saves MacIntyre from the charge of being inconsistent; nevertheless, I think by highlighting and elaborating this shared aspect of human beings we can, as I will try to show in the final chapter, define and justify a limited universal account of morality.

The primary premises of the natural law are, in Aquinas' and MacIntyre's views, universal moral principles such as the prohibition of theft or of killing the innocent. There do, of course, remain secondary premises regarding the application of the primary precepts that vary across cultures (2009a, p.89); however, this universality of the primary precepts of the natural law qualifies MacIntyre's earlier emphasis on the existence of different norms of practical rationality, as he puts it:

> What historical enquiry discloses is the situatedness of all enquiry, the extent to which what are taken to be the standards of truth and of rational justification in the contexts of practice vary from one time and place to another (2007, p.xii).

Unless we qualify MacIntyre's criticism of universalism regarding practical rationality, his account of the natural law tradition would reveal an inconsistency in his anthropology throughout his works. The explanation is that MacIntyre, on the one hand, from the perspective of the natural law tradition argues that plain persons have the capacity of understanding the precepts of the natural law, and on the other hand, he holds that the individual *qua* individual is not a "substantive moral agent":

> The individual *qua* rational person as substantive moral agent, characterizable independently of his or her social role and situation, has left to join unicorns, glass mountains, and squared circles in the realm that they share. The moral agents who actually exist are all living at some particular time and place, situated in some highly specific type of social role and situation, itself embedded to greater or lesser degree in some tradition or some confluence of traditions (1983a, p.454).

50

Clearly, plain persons, who possess the inherent knowledge of the good, are individuals and substantive moral agents, because they have in their hearts a knowledge of the good and of moral precepts independently of their social roles. I am aware that MacIntyre, as was mentioned above, believes the plain person might lose this knowledge in certain social circumstances like that of modernity; however, there is surely a significant difference between holding that certain social circumstances are inimical to this knowledge, and holding that the individual is not a moral agent at all independent of his culture or social roles.[10] The former is compatible with the natural law, because the knowledge of the good is a feature of human beings, who have it by their natures prior to contingent cultures. The latter is incompatible with the natural law, because it deprives the individual of his inherent knowledge of the good. In other words, it is compatible with the natural law tradition to hold that cultivating the inherent knowledge of plain persons of the good requires particular social and cultural settings like those based on Thomism; but it is not consistent with the natural law tradition to state that all practical rationalities are the products of traditions and cultural settings, or that the individual *per se* is not a substantial moral agent; a view which does not do justice to cross-cultural similarities.

The natural law tradition as introduced by MacIntyre has both individualistic and collectivist aspects. It is individualistic, as it takes individual plain persons as being aware of moral precepts (2000, p.92); it is collectivist, as it holds that individuals need appropriate cultural and social

---

[10] Lutz (2013) in a personal communication to me points out that this interpretation of MacIntyre is wrong, because in his view MacIntyre does not deny the individual independent of his social roles and settings to be a substantial moral agent, rather, for MacIntyre such an individual without a particular social setting does not, in fact, exist. I will explain further MacIntyre's account of the individual on page 70 where I think I can depict better MacIntyre's negative view of the very idea of the individual; however, even if we accept Lutz's nuanced distinction mentioned above, my worry is that the idea of the individual and his morality could be reduced to his social setting and roles in a way that it leads to moral relativism. To avoid this, I attempt to show in this thesis that the vulnerability of human beings is a fact that remains unchanged in different social settings, which can serve as basis for a shared morality. By doing this, I am not denying the role of social settings in determining a moral system; rather, I am pointing to a fact that I claim holds true of all human social settings to different degrees.

settings in order to cultivate this capacity. But if MacIntyre denies that individual moral agents independent of their social and cultural contexts are substantial moral agents, it would contradict this individualistic aspect. This inconsistency becomes more obvious if we take into account theistic assumptions of the natural law tradition, for instance, the view that human beings are created in the image of God. This means that the individual in his solitude has a knowledge of rightness and goodness, though this capacity requires development. This account of the individual is not compatible with holding that he, independent of his social roles and contexts, is not a substantial moral agent. As a result, in my view, MacIntyre's overall moral thought needs some revision to become consistent along the lines of his idea of the natural law tradition. In my conclusion to the thesis, I will expand on this metaphysical/biological approach to morality to argue for the necessity of holding a minimal trans-cultural and substantial account of morality.

In this section, I claimed that for MacIntyre practical rationality is ideally a kind of objectivity in the sense of subordinating our desires and preferences. Also, his ideal of theoretical rationality involves fallibilistic and discursive reasoning which is exemplified best in Thomism. Then, I explained how the process of practice, narrative and tradition, as is best represented in Aristotelianism and Thomism, yields this objectivity by subjecting the participants in practices to non-subjective measures, that is, internal goods of practices and the notion of the good. That is why Thomism encourages fallibilism; what this means will be explained in chapters 3 and 4. I then attended to some criticisms of MacIntyre on the formality of his social approach. I argued that, without bringing into the picture the implicit Aristotelian/Thomistic account of the good, MacIntyre's social teleology lacks sufficient content to determine what the good life is, and to rule out some practices as evil. I then continued by explaining MacIntyre's metaphysical approach, that is, his natural law theory, as designed to fill this vacuum, and also his view regarding the essential vulnerability of human beings, which requires some virtues to be addressed. I also argued that the universalistic aspect of MacIntyre's natural law theory is not fully compatible with an unqualified account of his notion of tradition-constituted

rationality, and that there are inconsistencies between MacIntyre's different accounts of anthropology, that is, between the individualism of the natural law and MacIntyre's anti-individualistic approach.

I.8 Conclusion

This chapter was intended to explain the concept and the role of tradition in MacIntyre's major works in and subsequent to *After Virtue*. To this end, I explained the different applications of the notion of tradition in his works, invented two terms—traditions in the general and in the ideal sense—to yield a better understanding of his use of this term, and discussed the features of traditions.

Among the three functions, which are conceptual scheme, methodological and contextual functions, I claimed that, in MacIntyre's view, these functions are discharged well by the classical, the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions.

Regarding the role of traditions as conceptual schemes, I stated that the liberal tradition, a tradition in the general sense, could not accomplish the task of rendering its moral concepts meaningful and intelligible, because this tradition is constituted by a dislocated melange of fragments of the classical and the Aristotelian tradition (1981, p.60). Liberalism, in MacIntyre's view, also does not possess the required background to serve as a context to define and justify a sufficient morality, due to its lack of the notion of the human good.

The methodological function is shared in different degrees between traditions in the general and in the ideal sense. The latter type has more resources to guide its arguments through different stages of the progress of tradition, and does not become mired in epistemological crises. A tradition that progresses well in respect of the methodological function becomes a tradition of intellectual and moral enquiry, and dialectically proceeds toward truths.

I then explained the internal structure of the classical, the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions, i.e. the trajectory of practice–narrative–tradition

that, in MacIntyre's view, has given them this privileged position. I argued that MacIntyre here is interpreting rationality in ethics as the objectivity of moral claims, which can be provided best in the Aristotelian and Thomistic schemes based on the notion of the common good, which is prior to and other than the sum of individual goods. I also discussed MacIntyre's metaphysical turn to the natural law tradition to provide a more concrete account of the good based on the facts of human nature.

This chapter provided an introduction to MacIntyre's notion of tradition-constituted rationality, which will be explained further in the next chapter based on the functions of traditions discussed in this chapter.

II-Chapter 2: Tradition-Constituted and Tradition-Constitutive Rationality and Justice

II.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I seek to explain what MacIntyre means by his notions of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality and justice. For the sake of brevity, and following M. Colby (1995, p.55) I will call these two notions "the constitution thesis" (or the CT) in this chapter and in the thesis generally. In what follows, I will explain this thesis in relation to the different functions of traditions, which were introduced in the previous chapter. In my view, one of these functions, i.e. traditions as conceptual schemes, might be a source of some misunderstandings of MacIntyre on the CT. To explain this, I will continue by explaining the CT on the basis of each function. These functions in tandem capture what MacIntyre means by this phrase.

The CT is, in principle, against the Enlightenment view of rationality according to which there is a paradigmatic and universal model of rationality independent of different traditions. MacIntyre criticizes this model of rationality on the grounds that there are no substantive principles of rationality that stand independent of particular traditions. By way of introduction to MacIntyre's account of the CT, I will explain briefly his criticism of the Enlightenment and its heirs, i.e. the contributors to the Nineteenth Century 9th edition of *the Encyclopaedia Britannica*, and 20th century analytical philosophy.

II.2 The Enlightenment and the *Encyclopaedia Brittanica*'s Notions of Practical Rationality

According to MacIntyre, morality in the late 17th and 18th century became a realm independent from theology, law and aesthetics, since it was assumed that it is possible to base moral claims on independent reasonable grounds so that they do not need to be held on reasons internal to other realms such as religion or the law (1981, p.39).

Such a view concerning the independence of morality, in MacIntyre's opinion, stems from a particular account of practical rationality as a faculty in human beings that is capable of producing universally binding moral ideas; for instance, according to Kant, MacIntyre (1981, p.45) maintains, "It is of the essence of reason that it lays down principles which are universal, categorical and internally consistent. Hence a rational morality will lay down principles, which both can and ought to be held by all men, independent of circumstances and conditions, and which could consistently be obeyed by every rational agent on every occasion".

The above quote clearly indicates the point that this view of practical rationality, in MacIntyre's interpretation (1981, p.32), is based on a particular account of human nature according to which it has the capacity to detach itself from all particularities without losing its faculty for practical reasoning. In this view, nothing should evade rational scrutiny, and human conduct is the subject of the rules and procedures issued by a universal practical rationality. The logical consequence of this view is that practical rationality is not determined or constituted by a framework or a conceptual scheme that itself is pre-rational and not subject to the procedures of practical rationality.

This view of practical rationality, which lent plausibility to a universal practical rationality, is also taken by the contributors to the ninth edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the 19th century. The overall view of these Encyclopaedists had the following characteristics. A Kantian view of reasoning as emancipation from the tutelage of authority, the primacy of epistemology as trying to find a general rationality based on some truths evident to all rational minds, the belief in reason as being progressive, and the idea that nothing lies beyond the realm of reason so understood (1990a, pp.64, 68-69,78).

In this view, though our knowledge of the world is limited, in principle there is not any logical limitation upon the attainment of knowledge. The pre-rational elements of rationality provided by traditions are regarded as prejudices that should be discarded in order to achieve a universal

56

rationality. Morality is an emerging phenomenon whose distinctness from rituals and superstitions would be visible to the civilized, and not to the primitive (1990a, p.176). A central claim of these authors has been that their 19th century account of duties and obligations is morally and rationally superior to the taboos of primitive people or savages (1990a, p.178).

In MacIntyre's account (1990a, p.178), anthropologists such as J. G. Frazer (1854-1941) and E. B. Tylor (1832-1917) studied taboos in isolation from the wider cultural and social contexts in which they had a role or application, and as a result understood them as "primarily negative prohibitions"; the view that is called "the intellectualist theory of magic". Frazer defines taboo as "a system of religious prohibitions". The main point of this intellectualist theory is that we can evaluate primitive ways of life and thought, employing our own standards of rationality and show their inadequacies based on these standards.

As E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1965, p.27) states, in Frazer's view, humankind everywhere passes through three stages of intellectual development: magic to religion, and from religion to science. In Tylor's view, Evans-Pritchard (1965, pp.26 & 29) narrates, the genuine methods of observation and logical deduction that we use in science are applied inadequately to primitive magic by primitive people; their mistake is that they establish mystical links between things based on their similarities, and that they mistake ideal connections for real ones; the causal connections they establish are in the mind, not in nature.

The above remarks indicate that according to this intellectualist theory the standards of rationality and logic are the same across cultures, and can be used for the evaluation of other traditions and systems of thought. In contrast to this, in MacIntyre's view, what were presented by these authors as taboos have had enabling functions in the process of practical reasoning, and are far more than mere prohibitive mechanisms and impediments on the way to discovering a civilized notion of morality (1990a, p.178).

MacIntyre (1994c, p.145) also criticizes the contemporary heirs of the Enlightenment in analytical philosophy, stating that although analytical

arguments are clear and rigorous, they cannot lead to substantive agreements, and if they do, it is because they are derived from their shared liberal background, not from the resources of analytical philosophy. This means that the power of these arguments is based on their liberal assumptions about human nature and its good, so they are not universally binding arguments and independent of a particular cultural setting. As opposed to this view, MacIntyre (1994c, p.144) is against "the abstractionism that detaches principles from socially embodied practice."

The present introduction gives us a general sketch of MacIntyre's view of rationality. While the Enlightenment project and its heirs, as depicted by MacIntyre, sought to discover the norms and rules of rationality that can explain and justify the substantial beliefs and codes of behaviour in different traditions, in MacIntyre's view (2006f, p.147), the universal norms of rationality cannot serve such a function, as it is only formal norms such as the law of non-contradiction that apply universally. This view is the heart of the CT, as will be explained below.

I start the main argument by defining the term "constitute" which is used in the phrase. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term as being part of a whole, and contributing to form a whole. Based on this, the CT means that traditions, or some concepts essentially related to them, are determining parts of the accounts of rationality and justice, which conduce to their formation.

Rationality here is basically practical rationality, which is the process by which we determine what to do or what not to do. The notion of justice is among the outcomes of practical rationality; that is to say, by the exercise of practical rationality among other things we come to know what justice is and what it requires us to do; as MacIntyre (1988a, p.2) puts it, "to know what justice is, so it may seem, we must first learn what rationality in practice requires of us." Accordingly, the CT with regard to practical rationality and justice is the claim that some elements that are integral and particular to traditions have a strong bearing on the way we think about moral issues. This effect is indispensable and cannot be eliminated in order

58

to formulate a universal account of practical thinking; however, I think MacIntyre based on his fallibilistic approach, which will be explained in chapters 3 and 4, would hold that whole structures of practical rationalities should be evaluated against each other, the same as he thinks regarding first principles which should be assessed in virtue of the whole systems in which they operate (2006f, p.160). In what follows, I explain the CT in relation to the different functions of traditions introduced in the previous chapter.

II.3 Explaining the Three Senses of the CT

II.3.1 The CT Based on the Function of Traditions as Conceptual Schemes

MacIntyre (1988a, pp.370-371) holds there can be conceptual schemes different from ours. In his view, there exists a "variety of moral practices, beliefs and conceptual schemes". An example of a conceptual scheme is scholasticism in which concepts such as potentiality, act and essence exist in tandem, and form a consistent meaningful system (1981, p.54). Conceptual schemes, sometimes, become barren and incoherent, as MacIntyre claims to be the case with regard to modern liberal morality in which the relation between different parts of this scheme has become muddled (1981, p.68).

As another example, the heroic society portrayed in Homeric poems embodies a conceptual scheme that is based on fulfilling the requirements of social roles; in this scheme obligations and virtues are defined by social roles. An essential element of this scheme is the vulnerability of human beings to death and destiny, which means the virtues require not avoiding vulnerability, but according it its due. Different aspects of this conceptual scheme refer to each other for their intelligibility (1981, p.129). In this archaic conceptual scheme, the notion of friendship is conceived either in terms of a kin relationship or a relationship that rests on some obligations similar to those that arise from kinship. Established social relations define the obligations that friends owe to each other (1988a, p.42). Modern individualism is a different conceptual scheme in which the notion of

59

tradition, in the ideal sense explained in the preceding chapter, is alien, and the autonomy of individuals has become a salient feature (1981, p.222).

Accordingly, in MacIntyre's account traditions have basic roles in making our conceptions and conceptual schemes. In this view, tradition is not an external feature related contingently to an individual, but it is, sometimes, a thoroughgoing element that provides a particular world-view and a system to define our moral regulations.

In my view, the term "constituted" used by MacIntyre has made it more apt to be understood in connection with the function of traditions as conceptual schemes and the ontological function than with the two others, which are the methodological and the contextual functions; however, as will be explained below, this might lead to some misunderstanding of MacIntyre's point.

Among the notions that are constructed in traditions and affect practical rationality are the notions of human nature and the human good. The explanation is that different versions of practical reasoning are based on different normative features of human beings, for instance human good, human rights, utility, etc., which all give rise to different versions of practical rationality; for instance, in Aristotelianism the notion of the human good is central, and is construed as a non-subjective attribute of human nature; as a result, practical reasoning in this scheme is different from a practical rationality that is based on subjective human desires.

MacIntyre's description of different practical rationalities in the Homeric and post-Homeric schemes can be used to spell out the role of different accounts of human nature and the good in practical reasoning. In MacIntyre's narrative, different views of human nature form a spectrum, with a Homeric account on the one side and a liberal account on the other. In the Homeric scheme, the universe is thought to have a single fundamental order, which governs both nature and society. *Dikē*, which means justice, in the Homeric scheme consists of the accordance of actions with this order, expressing itself in a hierarchy of social roles. It is required of any person to know his place in that structure and to fulfill its requirements. Thinking well

60

in this context is a kind of reminder regarding what *dikē* or excellence in a particular social role requires of agents (1988a, p.14). Everyone has a *thumos*, that is, the spirited part of the soul, which carries him forward. Passions may lead agents astray. They need a reminder to give them the strength of purpose needed by their *thumos* to overcome passions. Accordingly, in this view of human nature, firstly, passions are not in a position to afford reasons for actions; rather, they should be controlled in order to act properly (1988a, p.16). Secondly, the Homeric agent knows what he has to do independently of the process of reasoning. When he is reasoning, he is not assessing different reasons for action; rather, "he calls on his *arête* to give him strength of purpose to overcome the passion" (1988a, p.16); in other words, some passions might prevent him from doing what he should do, and the agent needs to control them.

In MacIntyre's view, the main distinction between the Homeric and later types of reasoning is that the former only secondarily concerns the question of "what am I to do?". The Homeric agent, due to his fixed position in a social order with determinate and known requirements, is aware of his obligations, and only needs a reminder and strengthening of his *thumos* (1988a, p.19).

This type of practical rationality differs from the practical rationality of 5th and 4th century Athens and from its successors in that in the later versions, agents do not know what to do prior to reasoning; they come to know what to do only after answering the question "what am I to do?" (1988a, p.20).

MacIntyre (1981, p.161) goes on to spell out the differences between Aristotelian practical rationality and Humean and post-Humean versions. He maintains that one of the features of Aristotelian practical rationality is that it would be necessarily followed by an action compatible with its premises. In this scheme, actions have truth-value; while in the Humean and post-Humean schemes of practical rationality only statements and sentences, and not actions, are thought to have truth-value. In addition, MacIntyre seems to hold that from the Aristotelian perspective moral

61

statements are cognitive statements, in the sense that they can be taken as true or false, while in the Humean account, moral statements lack this cognitive aspect.

The reason for this is that in the Aristotelian view and more generally according to the natural law, MacIntyre (1981, p.59) holds, moral statements are identical in meaning with factual statements about human nature. The "oughts" of morality can be construed as the precepts the observance of which as a matter of fact amounts to human beings' flourishing; morality in this system is a kind of "move from potentiality to act, [it tells us] how to realize our true nature and to reach our true end" (1981, p.52).

In Aristotelian practical rationality, the good provides a basis for the education of desires, and so it provides a measure for the truth or falsity of actions (1981, p.162). Consequently, in this scheme, actions attain truth-value and the gap between the facts of human nature and the "oughts" of morality, as assumed by Hume, is bridged, because for Aristotle human nature *per se* is a normative entity that enjoins some actions as moral in line with its flourishing. As a result, the principle of "no ought from is", is not a universal truth about morality, because moral judgments in the Aristotelian scheme turn into "factual judgments" that are more than personal preferences, contrary to what is claimed by emotivism, and are based on facts about human nature (1981, p.59).

Once functional accounts of subjects are employed in moral statements, these statements accrue the status of factual judgments; for instance, when I say a watch is a good one, as the notion of a watch is a functional notion in the sense that it has a function to fulfill, the normative judgment about the watch turns into a factual judgment that is informative about the real operation of the watch (1981, p.59).

So far, I have explained MacIntyre's cognitive view of morality; but this does not capture his entire claim regarding the truth-value of moral actions in the Aristotelian scheme. MacIntyre is not just claiming that moral judgments are cognitive and thus capable of being predicated as true or

62

false; he is claiming further that actions themselves have also truth-value, and not only moral judgments about these actions; in other words, we can say that this act is true or false. As he writes, "actions can of course express beliefs as certainly, although not always as clearly and unambiguously, as utterances can" (1981, p.161).

To explain this, I appeal to Aristotle's and Aquinas' notion of practical truth, which will be explained further in chapters 3 and 4. According to the practical sense of truth, the notion of *telos* can serve as the measure of the truth of things. In this view, an entity is true if it satisfies the functions it is designed for. From this perspective, actions are true if they accord with the agent's good, and so they attain truth-value on the basis of the good.

I am using here MacIntyre's notions of the goods of excellence and the goods of effectiveness, which respectively refer to the notions of internal goods and external goods of practices as explained in the previous chapter, as different conceptual schemes. The goods of excellence are the goods that are constitutive of practices independently of the desires of the participants in them. The goods of effectiveness are defined in terms of the people's desires, and relate only to the effective satisfaction of these desires (1988a, p.45).

According to the Aristotelian version of practical rationality, the goods of excellence should be moral agents' main reasons for acts, and they provide a hierarchical order with the good at the top and different desires and passions at the bottom. The good is expected to harmonize desires; as a result, the goods of excellence provide a unified picture of an agent's desires. In this view, what pleases the agent will not be *per se* a good reason for acts; rather, what is conducive to his good would be a good reason for him to act upon.

The difference in the role played by desires between this and a view based on the goods of effectiveness results in different structures of practical rationality. In a practical rationality based on the goods of effectiveness, like in Humean practical rationality, there is no vantage point for desires to comply with, and there would be no necessary or causal

63

relation between the outcome of a practical syllogism and an action; in other words, a practical syllogism does not necessarily terminate in an action (1981, p.160-161). As MacIntyre (1981, p.161) writes, "The notion that an argument can [or should necessarily] terminate in an action of course offends Humean and post-Humean philosophical prejudices ...."

In my view, the indeterminism of practical rationality, i.e. that practical reasoning does not terminate in an action, is related to the heterogeneous character of human desires. In the absence of the notion of a final good to discipline the desires, some of the agent's desires might impede the realization of the conclusion of a practical syllogism that is based on his other desires.

MacIntyre (1988a, p.21) pointing to Hume, holds that in the modern account of practical rationality desires are psychologically basic items, in the sense that there is no more fundamental basis by which to evaluate practical reasoning than by reference to these desires.[11] Modern practical rationality, MacIntyre maintains, is based on premises such as "I want" or "it pleases me", which depend on the motivations of particular agents (1988a, p.21).

The foregoing remarks suffice to show how the structure of practical rationality varies from a conceptual scheme and world-view in which social positions are fixed and obligations are known, to the post-Homeric era in which the distinction between the goods of effectiveness and excellence has started to emerge, and then to some conceptual schemes in which the teleological and functional notions of human beings are absent.

---

[11] It might be responded to MacIntyre here that surely there are moral principles offered on different grounds in modern morality with an aim to control our desires so as to make social life possible. Even if the modern agent might lack the Aristotelian notion of the good, he has many other considerations by which to assess his desires; so MacIntyre's contention that modern practical rationality is based on individual desires and wants seems to be an exaggeration. I assume MacIntyre's answer to this line of reasoning would be that, modern theories of morality are divorced from psychology; i.e. they do not have a convincing psychology to explain how egoistic agents become convinced to act against their desires. To this, it might be replied that considerations based on long-term benefits can convince an egoistic agent to act against his immediate impulses.

In Aristotelian practical rationality, desires and pleasures do not count as good reasons for actions; rather, what conduces to the good is a good reason for action. The prevalence of the common good in such a tradition gives practical rationality a non-personal character, which means the agent should tailor his individual desires according to the good; whereas in modern notions of practical rationality individual desires and autonomy provide the fundamental premises of a good practical reasoning. Accordingly, we can claim that distinct types of practical rationality have been constituted differently in different traditions based on their different notions of human nature and the good; as MacIntyre writes:

> That one's rationality should be not merely supported by but partly constituted by one's membership in and integration into a social institution of some one particular type is a contention very much at odds with characteristically modern views of rationality (1988a, p.123).

However, it is extremely important here to note that MacIntyre is not arguing that these different accounts of practical rationality represent an unrestricted pluralism or relativism in which we cannot say which account of practical rationality is superior; as MacIntyre holds, "We can recognize and give respect to a variety of points of view, so remaining moral pluralists, without becoming moral relativists" (1999c, p.8).

MacIntyre (1981, p.259) thinks that Aristotelian/Thomistic practical rationality is superior to its rivals. Nevertheless, the above discussion indicates that, in MacIntyre's view, as a matter of fact there are different ways of thinking in ethics which are related to and are constituted in different conceptual schemes, though some of them might be overwhelmed according to their own standards in the face of "epistemological crises". After explaining the role of different conceptual schemes in constituting practical rationalities, in the next section I will consider the different meanings that some of the outcomes of practical reasoning get in these different schemes.

II.3.1.1 Different Accounts of the Virtues in Different Conceptual Schemes

Pointing to the different accounts of practical rationality, MacIntyre also mentions the different accounts of the virtues that have resulted from them. MacIntyre does so by comparing different accounts of practical rationality and the virtues in the contexts of the goods of effectiveness and excellence.

The goods of excellence are internal goods of practices, which will be achieved by the exercise of practices following their norms; while the goods of effectiveness, like fame and wealth, are external goods which are the objects of desires prior to any notion of excellence in practices (1988a, p.32). These are two different contexts for practical reasoning, which give rise to the different structures of practical rationality, as was discussed above, and to different accounts of the virtues as follows.

I-In both contexts, obedience to the rules of justice counts as a virtue, but these rules differ in terms of their justification, content and their abiding force for those who accept their authority in the two contexts (1988a, pp.32-33). Justice in the context of the goods of excellence is definable independently of and antecedently to the rules of justice, in terms of desert, and consists of giving to everyone what he deserves. It is not based on a contract or principles of cooperative activity. In other words, what people deserve and, more generally, the concept of the good is conceptually prior to any contract or agreed principle of cooperation among people; whereas justice in the context of effectiveness is nothing but obeying the rules of justice, which are formulated through reciprocal cooperative activity (1988a, p.37).

If the concept of desert in the context of the goods of excellence is not derivable from rules of justice, in MacIntyre's view, it would be provided by traditions, established social roles, social and cultural settings, etc. These contexts define people's moral commitments toward each other. As was argued in the previous chapter, in MacIntyre's view, when the appeal to moral rules, including the rules of justice, becomes foremost, this indicates

66

that moral ties between people have weakened. When communal ties and commitments between people are strong, they can manage their relationships by reference to what is their due based on these commitments and shared understandings. The appeal to external rules will be a last resort (1980, p.32).

II-Another difference between the two goods concerns the binding force of the rules of justice. The binding force of the goods of excellence stems from the fact that breaking these rules primarily harms the agent. The agent may not be aware of this fact, so punishments may be necessary to teach him that the fulfillment of the rules of justice is to his own good, and leads him to obtain his appropriate deserts; whereas the agents who abide by the rules of the justice of effectiveness follow cost-benefit analyses. Breaking these rules primarily hurts others, and the agent usually thinks he is benefiting from breaking them if he is not detected (1988a, pp.37-38).

III-The concepts that acquire different meanings in the different contexts of effectiveness and excellence include the notions of politics, courage, temperateness and friendship. The politics of effectiveness consists of techniques to promote and reconcile different rival interests in a single working system. Politics in this sense does not encourage a shared understanding of the good; rather, it aims at constructing a regime whose work and efficiency lies in the pursuit of different rival interests. The claim of the modern state to neutrality is understandable in this regard (1988a, pp.217 &344).

As opposed to this ideal of neutrality in the politics of effectiveness, the politics of excellence seeks to reinforce people's allegiance to a shared understanding of the good and to a relevant account of justice; it seeks to integrate different practices in a life ordered toward the good. This politics concerns only secondarily conflicts of interests, and it is concerned with them especially when they prevent people from attaining the common good. Its first concern is to promote a conception of justice that improves the shared allegiance to the good (1988a, p.39). In this view, people's identities

are partly constituted by their notions of the good, and there are no imaginary free persons to propose universal rules of justice.

By the same token, the temperateness of excellence consists in the education of the desires according to the good, such that what we judge or perform accords to the good; whereas the temperateness of effectiveness enjoins moving effectively toward goods recognized as desirable; on this basis, as MacIntyre states, "temperateness is the virtue which overcomes frustration by oneself in one's pursuit of one's own satisfaction, just as justice is the virtue which overcomes frustration by others" (1988a, p.40). What is desirable, in the latter view, does not offer a good reason for action from the perspective of excellence. Desires should be disciplined in order to lead us toward the good.

The virtue of friendship in the context of the goods of effectiveness is based on mutual utility of the friends, whatever their private goods may be; while the friendship of excellence requires having and promoting a shared allegiance to the good. The friendship of effectiveness does not concern the common good and people's allegiance to it; rather, it addresses the effective and mutual satisfaction of the friends' desires (1988a, p.42). In my terminology, the latter kind of friendship does not seek to make the friends better human beings by encouraging them to follow a particular conception of the good.

The above remarks show the different structures of practical rationality which reflect themselves also in the meanings of the virtues. The underlying difference between them is based on different conceptions of human nature and its good. In one moral conceptual scheme a functional and teleological conception of a human being is at work; while in the other, human beings are depicted as the maximizers of their own subjective desires in a context that lacks an objective moral order.

Another feature of MacIntyre's thought, which can explain the CT in connection with a conceptual scheme, is his view regarding the embodied self. It was argued in the foregoing chapter that, in MacIntyre's view, the individual *qua* individual and irrespective of his place in a social setting is

68

not a substantive moral agent (1983a, p.454). The individual is embodied in a social and cultural context that constitutes his features and obligations.

The most salient aspect of this view of the self is MacIntyre's contention that individual objects of pleasures and pains are not universal features of human beings; that is to say, they do not apply to all human beings regardless of the way in which their characters have been constituted within traditions. In MacIntyre's view, the human being without a culture is a myth (1981, p.161). This view of the self attaches MacIntyre to the communitarian tradition, even though he dislikes the label (2007, p.xiv). This view of the self is against the individualism of Liberalism.

This individualism is noticeable in Hobbes' picture of the state of nature in which it is as if men "sprung out of the earth, and suddenly, like mushrooms, come to full maturity, without all kinds of engagement to each other" (W. Molesworth 1962, p.109). By contrast, in Aristotle's view, understanding and implementing justice requires a social capacity, as MacIntyre puts it, "Aristotle however represents a tradition of thought, in which he is preceded by Homer and Sophocles, according to which the human being who is separated from his social group is also deprived of the capacity for justice" (1988a, p.96). This view, which reveals well MacIntyre's constitution thesis, is, however, more compatible with his initial social view of human nature, and not with his metaphysical interpretation of the natural law tradition, as was argued in the previous chapter, because according to the natural law tradition plain persons' knowledge of morality itself is not a product of social contexts, though they need proper conditions for its cultivation.

In this section, I argued how different conceptions of human nature affect practical reasoning. An Aristotelian view of human nature results in an approach to practical reasoning based on the education of desires, which terminates in an action, unlike an emotivistic view of human nature and its good. This difference reflects itself in the meanings of different virtues built upon different practical rationalities. Also, I showed that a social teleological view of human nature, as was MacIntyre's view in *After Virtue*,

resulted in the view that the self is not capable of practical reasoning independently of the resources and capacities developed by the tradition that forms it. This poses problems regarding how MacIntyre can reconcile his constitution thesis with his later more metaphysical view.

As was remarked at the beginning of the chapter, the CT, particularly in the version affiliated with conceptual schemes, might lead to a misunderstanding of MacIntyre. There are two ways in which MacIntyre might be misunderstood. The first is to assume that different accounts of rationality and justice are incommensurable, and so there is no way to compare them. I will discuss MacIntyre's account of incommensurability in chapter 4 to show how it is possible to attempt to make what might seem the incommensurable commensurable without the need for neutral grounds. Suffice it to note here that MacIntyre thinks by drawing a narrative that explains the move from one theory to another in terms of their merits and demerits, we can make them comparable (1991b, pp.117-118).

The second misunderstanding would be to read him as a conservative communitarian who sees no prospect of transcending the horizon of a given community. A conservative communitarian emphasizes the limitedness of the moral capacities of agents to communities and their inherited traditions. R. Scruton, for example, adopts such a view, arguing that the liberals who propose versions of communitarianism like "Sandel, Walzer and Dworkin" are "not prepared to accept the real price of community: which is sanctity, intolerance, exclusion, and a sense that life's meaning depends upon obedience, and also on vigilance against the enemy" (R. Scruton 1990, p.278).

The role of traditions in making conceptual schemes in MacIntyre's works sometimes approaches an ontological function by suggesting that traditions might go beyond making our concepts to constitute the identities of the agents who are operating in them. This ontological function supports conservative communitarianism as explained above, by holding that people in different traditions have different fixed identities, and so they cannot communicate and learn from each other. MacIntyre's rejection of the

individual as a substantial moral agent might misleadingly strengthen this interpretation.

MacIntyre dismisses the idea that individuals' moral identity can be constituted independently of their social roles and relationships with each other in the context of a tradition. He (2008, p.266) holds that it is a crucial feature of "the self-understanding of modernity" that people generally think their decision-making powers belong to them *qua* individuals prior to and independently of their social identity; in his view, this picture of the self is "a liberal discovery" and a part of "the cult of the individual". MacIntyre (1983a, p.454), by contrast, maintains that the individual is not a substantial moral agent; i.e. we cannot articulate a morality for him without taking into account his place in a social setting.

Despite the existence of some evidence in MacIntyre's works for the ontological function of traditions, as partly discussed above, a closer reading of him shows that he criticizes the view that social and cultural orders can act as the total determinants and constituents of the self. The gist of his position is that some social orders threaten the understanding of oneself as a moral agent. This happens by reducing moral agency to the fulfillment of social requirements; whereas MacIntyre holds that moral agency is more than role-playing, and concerns the good of human beings *qua* human beings (1999b, p.314). Based on this, while tradition endows us with some kind of identity, and in some sense constitutes us, our intellectual and moral capacities are not or should not be limited to the resources made available to us by our traditions. In this view, the notion of morality as employed in the Homeric world is a limited notion of morality due to its exclusive emphasis on social requirements. The limitations of such a view, MacIntyre (1988, pp.84-85) contends, are surpassed in Aristotelianism in which there is a reference to human flourishing, which goes beyond the fulfillment of social requirements. This view is more compatible with MacIntyre's later espousal of the natural law tradition than with his earlier social view in *After Virtue*. MacIntyre's later account of identity has become more metaphysical in line with the natural law tradition, which places emphasis on human nature and

71

the good as the identifying features of human kind independent of different traditions; nevertheless, MacIntyre's social and metaphysical views sometimes conflict, for instance, in his rejection of the idea of natural or human rights as rights independent of traditions and practices (1981, p.69), which will be discussed in chapter 6.

Despite the conservative communitarian claim, as will be seen in chapters 4 and 5, MacIntyre allows inter-conceptual understanding and communication. This approach lets MacIntyre, though not completely as will be explained in chapter 4, avoid the relativistic implications that might seem to follow from an emphasis on conceptual schemes. Accordingly, we should not take MacIntyre as an adherent of conservative communitarianism which does not allow appeals to any ground beyond the community for evaluating its claims.

Indeed, I will argue later in the present chapter that MacIntyre himself and some of his interpreters consider him as a revolutionary Aristotelian which is in stark contrast with conservative communitarianism. Nevertheless, a tension seems to lurk between, on the one hand, MacIntyre's sometimes strong emphasis on the role of traditions, and on the other hand, his later metaphysical view of human nature which requires not seeing human beings as totally constituted by their traditions.

In this section, I explained the CT in relation to the idea of conceptual schemes. I argued that practical rationality in the context in which the goods of excellence are paramount has structural differences with practical rationality based on the goods of effectiveness. I also discussed MacIntyre's anthropology according to which the self is embodied in its social setting. This view of the self, albeit with different degrees of situatedness of the self, is typical of different versions of communitarianism from conservative to liberal and to social versions (D. Miller 1999, p.107). This account of the CT based on the notion of conceptual schemes is more likely to be affiliated with the conservative version of communitarianism, but to take this as a reading of MacIntyre might amount to the misinterpretation of his work. In

the next section, I attend to the CT based on the role of traditions as the contexts for the definition of the virtues.

II.3.2 The CT Based on Traditions as Contexts of the Virtues

As was noted in the previous chapter, a function of traditions in the ideal sense is to provide a context for the definition and the exercise of the virtues. Tradition in this sense is the community of past and present human lives each of which is directed toward the good. In MacIntyre's view, the life of virtue is related to practical rationality. In this section, I will explore further how the acquisition of the virtues relates to practical rationality, and how the virtues constitute practical rationality.

MacIntyre, from an Aristotelian perspective, holds there is a relation between practical rationality and the virtues. That MacIntyre takes practical rationality itself as an intellectual virtue, which is *phronesis*, points to this relation. To spell out this issue better, let us consider what MacIntyre means by a virtue.

For MacIntyre, following Aristotle, virtues are dispositions not only to act but also to feel in a particular way. Virtuous action is not, as understood by Kant in MacIntyre's interpretation, acting against inclinations; rather, it requires the transformation of these inclinations such that the agent moves toward his good and the good on the basis of his cultivated desires (1981, p.149). This means that the virtues constitute and affect practical rationality by taming the desires. The process of taming desires occurs in an apprentice/master relationship. Intellectual virtues like wisdom, intelligence and prudence are acquired through teaching; moral virtues or the virtues of character like courage and justice are acquired by practice and habituation (1966, p.64; 1981, p.154). Aristotle (*NE*, II.1) explains the relation between the virtues and habits as follows:

> Virtue, then, being of two kinds, intellectual and moral, intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time), while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit, whence also its name (*ethike*) is one that is formed by a slight variation from the word *ethos* (habit). ... Neither by

73

> nature, then, nor contrary to nature do the virtues arise in us; rather we are adapted by nature to receive them, and are made perfect by habit.

The role of habituation in the development of the virtues is evident in the above passage. In Aristotle's view, practical rationality is a kind of virtue that, like other virtues, cannot be reduced to rule-following behaviour. It is not possible to design some rules such as Kant's categorical imperative to designate an action as practically rational (1981, p.236).

From this Aristotelian perspective, a novice learns how to act justly, in part from others, in a particular situation, and repeats his just actions in order to develop in himself the habit of behaving justly; he can then figure out the unarticulated principles of justice in his particular actions (1988a, pp.92-93). By fathoming the unarticulated principles of right action gained through the habit of right-doing the agent might become able to apply these principles to other particular non-experienced cases. The habit of right action might lead to the virtue of *phronesis*, i.e. the knowledge of what to do in particular situations, and since in Aristotle's view right action is a subset of the good, it might result in a better knowledge of the good (1988, p.92).

In Aristotle's view, MacIntyre (2006i, pp.3-4) maintains, "practical habituation in the exercise of the virtues has to precede education in moral theory." Only those who have acquired good habits are able "to theorize well about issues of practice." Only the practically intelligent human being, in Aristotle's view, can judge the mean in any particular situation. Such a person does not have any external criterion to guide him, but he himself is "the standard of right judgment, passion, and action." Even true theoretical moral judgments are only accessible to the good human being. These judgments, unlike theories in the physical sciences, require more than intellectual virtues, and require participation in particular kinds of moral and political practices (2006i, p.4).

In practical reasoning, unlike theoretical enquiries, we do not start with "some partly articulated highly general conception of that end that can be stated in propositional form." Rather, we begin with the directedness of our

action, which we find firstly by our nature, and then by habituation toward some ends. Our disagreements with others on moral issues prompt us to investigate into the nature of the habits and the education that we have acquired so far, and to provide resources to remove inadequacies (2006j, p.75). From Aristotle's perspective, MacIntyre (2011, p.11) maintains, rational arguments with those who do not have the required formed character is not useful. On this basis, Aristotle holds, it is impossible to teach politics and ethics to the young.

There is a dialectical relation between the knowledge of the good and the knowledge of right action. What we take to be right in a particular situation, on the one hand, is reinforced by our notion of the good and the good life, and on the other hand, the exercise of practical rationality in particular situations strengthens our notion of the good (1988a, pp.117-118).

The intellectual virtue of *phronesis* is achieved by moral virtues and the habit of undertaking right actions, which in turn depends on our performing right actions in particular situations. The habit of acting rightly in particular cases is developed through apprenticeship and learning from others. Therefore, an agent apart from an appropriate community, in Aristotle's terms a *polis,* lacks the capacity for practical rationality, since he lacks the opportunity to become initiated into the life and the education of the virtues, and he cannot cultivate the principles of right and virtuous action. Without these principles, he cannot exercise his capacity of practical rationality (1988a, pp.122-123).

This view of practical reasoning, which heavily relies on the notion of following exemplars, is at odds with the Kantian view of morality which sees in Aristotle's view of morality a circularity; as Kant holds "Even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before he is cognized as such" (Kant [1785]1996, Sec. 4:409, p.63). By contrast from an Aristotelian perspective, practical reasoning and theoretical reflection on the nature of moral concepts are conducted retrospectively. An agent experiencing righteous performance in a particular situation, and learning from others what morality requires him to do can

later understand what the good at stake is in that situation. Using a dialectical method that moves between the experience of moral conduct and his partial conception of the good, he would be able to formulate the first principles, *archai*, of his practical rationality. Accordingly, the dialectical method does not start from first principles; rather, it arrives finally at such principles (1988a, p.100).

A novice is not able at the outset to understand the rationality of moral actions, since his untutored passions and desires impede him from understanding the relation of these actions and feelings to the good. Accepting the authority of moral masters lets him educate and harmonize his passions. In the first stages of the moral life, he acts according to moral principles with an incentive to please others around him, who are experienced in matters of morality. After acquiring sufficient moral education, he passes from mere conformity to moral principles to achieving moral virtues and grasping the logic of moral principles. Only at this stage is the agent experienced enough to understand and present a rational justification for moral principles and moral virtues (1988a, pp.114-115).

Becoming an independent practical reasoner is a process that starts from agents acknowledging their dependence on others. Agents are dependent on others not only for their physical and psychological needs but also for the formation of a process that eventually results in their independent practical reasoning. Children as incompetent moral agents act so as to please their mothers and those around them. It is the role of good mothers and good parents as immediate moral instructors to teach children that if they really want to please them, they should act according to the good, whether it pleases their elders or not (1999a, p.84).

The acknowledgment of dependence on others has a crucial role in achieving independence in practical reasoning. In this process, the external reasons for actions such as pleasing others would turn into internal reasons by transforming desires and directing them to the good. Moral and intellectual virtues are qualities a novice needs to develop in this process (1999a, p.87). Because of this transformation, a well-trained agent does not

act morally out of confrontation with his desires; rather, he finds moral conduct agreeable and enjoyable (1999a, p.88). In the course of this development, he learns how to separate himself from his desires, and to evaluate, revise and if necessary replace them according to his notion of the good. In doing so, he has surpassed the animal condition of simply having reasons for action, and has developed in its place a human capability of evaluating and modifying those reasons (1999a, p.91).

MacIntyre, emphasizing the role of moral education, emphasizes moral errors, besides intellectual mistakes, as sources of flawed practical reasoning. Some vices like insufficient sensitivity to others' sufferings or hatred of others might impede us from separating ourselves from our passions and according other people their due in the process of practical rationality. The best protections from these two kinds of errors, i.e. intellectual and moral, are found in friendship and collegiality. Our friends and colleagues can help us detect our intellectual and moral mistakes, and keep us on the right track in the process toward becoming an independent practical reasoner (1999a, p.96).

These remarks show that we should learn to become virtuous in moral traditions prior to being able to construct a practical rationality that informs us of the point of being virtuous, and of the goods which are at stake in moral conduct, and this is partly what is meant by the CT, because there are some elements, the virtues, that precede practical rationality. This sense of the CT relates to MacIntyre's virtue-ethics.

A quotation from another proponent of virtue-ethics and virtue-epistemology might shed light on MacIntyre's approach here. J. McDowell (1979, pp.331-332) explains the role of the virtues in practical reasoning in terms of the reliable sensitivity that they cause. He argues that a kind person or a virtuous person in general has "a reliable sensitivity" to the requirements of kindness in particular situations, letting him know when and how to behave kindly. The kind person has a "perceptual capacity", yielding him the knowledge of the requirements of kindness in particular cases. In other words, having the virtues gives the agent a perceptual

capability to recognize if a given situation requires behaving according to one virtue or another. This knowledge is not reducible to the application of the rules of moral action. McDowell, on this basis, opposes principle-based ethics, and argues that "should statements" cannot function as reasons for justifying an obligation; rather, we need appropriate specific considerations to support these statements (McDowell 1978, p.14).

One feature of Aristotle's account of practical rationality related to the role of the virtues and apprenticeship is that agents rely on each other in practical reasoning about important issues (*NE,* 1112b, 10-11, in A. MacIntyre (1999a, p.107)). In this view, MacIntyre contends that a collective questioning and answering about the good often takes place prior to individual deliberation. Practical reasoning is a collective and social enterprise in which agents reason with each other. An agent needs to engage in different social relations to achieve his own conception of the good in order to be qualified later as an independent practical reasoner (1999a, p.107).

MacIntyre also explains his idea of virtue-based practical rationality by describing moral philosophy as a craft. He takes this view in his criticism of the Enlightenment and its heirs in the 19th century. In MacIntyre's view, the Enlightenment's approach faced the following problem. The procedures of practical rationality, like Kant's categorical imperative, designed to distinguish moral from immoral action are not exclusively the products of a universal practical rationality; rather, some elements of traditional values are present in what is assumed to be rationally right (1981, p.43). In other words, the procedures and the tests of practical rationality apply only retrospectively to sets of conduct, in the sense that agents do not employ these procedures empty-heartedly to determine what actions are morally right or wrong; rather, the particularity of agents' lives would impact on the procedures adopted by them, and it is not the case that as Kant ([1785] 1996, Sec.4:389, p.45) assumes "the ground of obligation here must not be sought in the nature of the human being or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed, but *a priori* simply in the concepts of pure reason."

78

MacIntyre argues to the contrary that "Kant never doubted for a moment that the maxims which he had learnt from his own virtuous parents were those which had to be vindicated by a rational test. Thus the content of Kant's morality was conservative" (1981, p.44).

In MacIntyre's view, the conservative and particular elements present in agents' moral lives play a significant role in constituting the structure of their practical rationality. This contention is at the heart of MacIntyre's notion of tradition-constituted rationalities. The procedures of practical rationality are designed, whether we know this or not, to meet the demands of particular moral attitudes. In other words, the Enlightenment's moral philosophers like others have had some moral and intellectual virtues informing their notion of practical rationality. What Kant took to be a test for moral actions tacitly presupposed what was right according to his inherited Pietist Lutheran morality. If we take these characters and inclinations away, in MacIntyre's view, Kant's moral test of consistent universalizability would include as moral some non-moral or amoral principles:

> It is very easy to see that many immoral and trivial non-moral maxims are vindicated by Kant's test quite as convincingly—in some cases more convincingly—than the moral maxims which Kant aspires to uphold. So 'Keep all your promises throughout your entire life except one', 'Persecute all those who hold false religious beliefs' and 'Always eat mussels on Mondays in March' will all pass Kant's test, for all can be consistently universalized (1981, pp.45-46).

MacIntyre holds that Kant has tried to give substance to this formal moral test by adopting the view that morality enjoins treating others as ends in themselves. However, in MacIntyre's view, the formal criterion of morality does not logically necessitate such a content. It is, rather, possible to treat others as instruments without flouting the formal criterion of consistent universalizability; for instance, an egoistic person can consistently will that all people except him be treated as a means (1981, p.46).

79

In my view, if we consider Kant's account of the good, which consists in the intrinsic dignity of human beings as a guiding principle of morality, then MacIntyre's criticism loses its point, as Kant's approach is not purely formal. Based on this point, the egoistic person in MacIntyre's example is not acting morally even if he can will consistently to treat others as means, because by doing so he is taking other human beings as means and not as ends in themselves. However, I cannot here enter into discussion about Kant's moral theory, and restrict myself to MacIntyre's presentation of Kant's theory.

The contrasting view espoused by MacIntyre is that of philosophy, including moral philosophy, as a craft. What distinguishes the craft-view of moral enquiry and philosophy from the Enlightenment's and 19th century Encyclopaedist's perspective is two-fold. First, there is the role of apprenticeship in a craft. Second, there is the role of intellectual and moral virtues in exercising practical rationality and understanding moral concepts.

While the Encyclopaedists and the Enlightenment philosophers began with the rejection of authority and the adoption of an individual-centred epistemology, the craft-view emphasizes the role of authority and traineeship in obtaining knowledge. This relationship assists an apprentice to distinguish a genuine good from a seeming good, and also what is good for him based on his training level from what is good without qualification (1990a, p.61).

In MacIntyre's view, the relationship between virtue and practical rationality can resolve the dilemmas that one meets in, for example, Plato's Meno paradox. The Meno paradox of practical rationality is the dilemma that either we know something or we do not. If we know it, then what would be the point of enquiry, and if we do not know it, the question would be how it is possible to undertake enquiry about it, and how we can ensure that we have achieved the truth.

In response, MacIntyre holds that unless we have the potentiality of moving toward particular theoretical and practical conclusions, we would be unable to learn. These potentialities are capacities for acquiring moral and

intellectual virtues; also, we need a trainer to teach us what habits of mind and character to have, and how to develop them (1990a, pp. 63&130).

The craft-view of moral enquiry emphasizes the existence of pre-rational elements that "initially" are not open to rational scrutiny, and which constitute the structure of practical rationality. In the craft-view, the authority of the masters and virtues into which the apprentice is initiated are not the subjects of practical reasoning; as MacIntyre writes:

> The intending reader has to have inculcated into him or herself certain attitudes and dispositions, certain virtues, *before* he or she can know why these are to be accounted virtues. So a pre-rational reordering of the self has to occur before the reader can have an adequate standard by which to judge what is a good reason and what is not. And this reordering requires obedient trust, not only in the authority of this particular teacher, but in that of the whole tradition of interpretative commentary into which that teacher had had earlier him or herself to be initiated through his or her reordering and conversion (1990a, pp.82-83).

This account of practical rationality, which emphasizes the role of the virtues, denotes the Augustinian aspect of MacIntyre's thought; this view, however, in some respects conflicts with the democratic and fallibilistic aspects of MacIntyre's thought in which he argues, for instance, that a flourishing rational community should be a local one in which it is possible to put office-holders and the citizens to question by each other in order to arrive at a common mind (1998b, p.248)[12], or that "corrigibility and refutability are necessary properties of any theory for which truth can be claimed" (2006g, p.187). The conflict is that the virtue-elements would surely put some limitations on the scope of questioning, as the virtuous might ask the novices to first become virtuous in order to understand the wisdom of their actions. The knowledge that is at the disposal of the virtuous cannot be easily revised or refuted by other people; the knowledge which has some character formation as its backdrop does not easily change

---

[12] MacIntyre (2006p, p.213) uses the expression "rational local community" to describe such a community.

upon the disclosure of its inadequacies. To modify this problem, I used above the qualification that the novice-master relationship is not "initially" open to revision, which means when the novice becomes experienced enough he can challenge the master. This modification can to some extent solve the problem, as it ideally allows revision at the later stages of apprenticeship.

In contrast with this craft-view, in the Enlightenment's account, there should be rational grounds for agents' adoption of these initial elements. Agents should exert autonomous rationality and be able to reflect on the initial context in which they happen to reason; whereas in MacIntyre's view, the practical rationality of these prior constituting elements is not recognizable by everyone; only a just person can recognize the justice of a given state of affairs; as MacIntyre (1988a, p.106) states, "on Aristotle's view it is impossible generally to judge consistently aright concerning a particular virtue without possessing the virtue".

According to the tradition-constituted account of rationality explained above, the background given by a tradition provides the possibility for an agent to reason based on these starting-points. These points can serve their part as the starting premises of practical rationality if they are inculcated into an agent as intellectual and moral virtues. Hence, in MacIntyre's view, there is no way to start a practical syllogism from self-justificatory and convincing-for-all first principles (1988a, pp.251-252).

It is important to note here that MacIntyre's emphasis on the significance of communities, and his referring to the idea of the "justice of a *polis*" (1988, p.34) in post-Homeric Greece are not intended to have relativistic implications. Arguing about different meanings of the virtues in different Greek cities, MacIntyre (1988, p.79) is against the relativistic and the sophistic view that every claim is inevitably from a point of view. However, MacIntyre's constitution thesis and his view that "progress in rationality is achieved only from a point of view" might suggest the same sophistic point (1988a, p.144).

82

MacIntyre, on the one hand, denies this relativistic understanding, which is evident in his rejection of the reduction of the idea of truth to warranted assertibility in traditions (1988a, p.363), and on the other hand, denies the possibility of leaving aside all one-sighted points of view in enquiries (1988a, p.80). To resolve this tension, I would suggest that, in MacIntyre's account, we start from contingent partial points of view; however, the outcomes of our enquiries can compete with each other, and the one(s) which survives challenges would be rationally superior (1988a, p.388). As MacIntyre puts it, "each of these stages [of progress in enquiries] will have been marked both by less and less partial insight and yet also by a continuing one-sidedness" (1988a, p.80).[13]

Accordingly, I think M. Nussbaum's criticism of MacIntyre based on her interpretation of Aristotle is not correct, because MacIntyre is not espousing a moral relativism by his CT. Nussbaum's point is as follows.

> Aristotle does not believe that people need to seek arguments to justify their beliefs only from within each single local tradition. He considers ideas from Persia and Sparta, from Cyme and Athens, all in an attempt to construct an account of the good life for any and every human being (M. Nussbaum 1989, p.41).

Neither does MacIntyre believe that rational justification should only be sought from within a single tradition, as rational accounts provided from each tradition should compete with others to check which one is more adequate. MacIntyre's point is that justification is inevitably from a point of view, but justified beliefs should compete with others to see which one is more adequate in terms of explanatory capacity, consistency, etc. After elaborating the relation of the virtues to practical rationality, and explaining the CT based on this relation, I shall try to address the charge of moral arbitrariness against MacIntyre's account of virtue-ethics, as it is relevant to the current discussion.

---

[13] I will return to this issue more extensively in chapter 4 in my discussion of relativism and perspectivism.

II.3.2.1 MacIntyre's Response to the Charge of Moral Arbitrariness

By the charge of moral arbitrariness, I mean whether objective moral norms govern the relationship between masters and their pupils, or whatever moral masters' commands serve as the measures of rightness.

MacIntyre's response to this question would be that there are surely some moral norms that should guide the attitude of a master toward his students. The content of what a master is teaching and his conduct cannot be arbitrary if he wants to teach justice and other virtues. This view distinguishes MacIntyre from the conservative communitarianism, which I discussed earlier. What is valued in different communities cannot necessarily be taken as morally true; as MacIntyre has declared he sees no value in community as such, and that many types of community are oppressive (2007, p.xiv). He argues also that masters, including parents, should teach pupils to act according to their good, whether it pleases their masters or not. When pupils are not independent practical reasoners, pleasing masters might be a temporary sign of good behaviour; but they should gradually become independent practical reasoners, and act according to what they have been taught as being objectively good (1999a, p.84). This indicates that the good is independent of the master's wishes and desires, though he might be more competent to know the good and the right than a novice. Furthermore, masters and teachers should have the virtues they try to teach. There should not be inconsistencies between masters' assertions and their actions (1999a, p.89).

Although I agree that MacIntyre does not intend to have a virtue-theory that makes moral principles dependent on the arbitrary wills of moral masters, the Aristotelian account of virtue-ethics is more apt than the Kantian version of virtue-ethics to lead toward moral arbitrariness, because Aristotle takes moral masters as the criteria of the mean and the virtues[14]; as

---

[14] Aristotle (*NE*, II-6): "Virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which *the man of practical wisdom would determine it* " (Italics added).

was mentioned earlier, MacIntyre (2006i, pp.3-4) holds that for Aristotle the moral master who is practically wise does not have any external criterion for the good and the right, and he himself is the standard; whereas for Kant moral masters should be judged on the basis of moral ideals. As was explained earlier in this chapter, Kant holds "Even the Holy One of the Gospel must first be compared with our ideal of moral perfection before he is cognized as such" (Kant [1785]1996, Sec. 4:409, p.63).

MacIntyre's ([1978] 1985, pp.129-130) denial of the idea of natural rights independent of practices and traditions might strengthen this interpretation, as this entails the lack of any context-independent measures for the evaluation of practices. Furthermore, MacIntyre's espousal of the universal precepts of the natural law, like truth-telling and avoidance of gratuitous harming of others, can serve as such context-independent measures. By this, I mean there are conflicting aspects in MacIntyre's work some of which might be invoked to offer an interpretation that leans toward moral arbitrariness, which is not compatible with the general tenor of his work.

Based on this response from MacIntyre's perspective, I think M. T. Mitchell (2006) has laid excessive emphasis on the commonalities between MacIntyre's and M. Polanyi's views concerning the role of tradition in knowledge. There are, of course, similarities between the two figures in that both place emphasis upon the role of submission to authorities in acquiring knowledge and assessing its rationality. For both, rational justification is retrospective, and is preceded by trust in some sort of authority. However, as was argued in the previous chapter regarding Porter's interpretation of MacIntyre, the emphasis on MacIntyre's appeal to the notion of authority should be in tune with his fallibilism and his insistence on constant rational evaluation of theories.

Mitchell (2006, p.111) quotes Polanyi (1958, p.259) as saying that "any enquiry into our ultimate beliefs can be consistent only if it

85

presupposes its own conclusions; it must be intentionally circular." As Mitchell notes, MacIntyre (1990a, pp.63&130) also refers to this circularity when he invokes the paradox of the Meno. MacIntyre's denial of neutrality in moral enquiries (1990a, pp.60-63), and his view that the objectivity of good is realized only from particular perspectives also reinforces this understanding (1990a, p.60). Nevertheless, we should recall that MacIntyre considers the charge of circularity to be a false one by which he means we can start our enquiries based on the limited potential knowledge that we have, and then move toward a more articulated one. MacIntyre attempts to avoid compromising his correspondence theory of truth according to which our theories can really escape the circularity and limitations of our conceptual scheme to accord with reality.

Indeed, Mitchell (2006, p.119) points to the metaphysical realism of both MacIntyre and Polanyi; but besides this feature, he should take into account MacIntyre's epistemological realism according to which we should make our theories accordant with realities that exist independently of our thoughts. Highlighting the role of authority and the virtues should not compromise the realistic element in MacIntyre's theory of truth. Neither should it overlook the possibility of the revision and the falsification of intellectual authorities.

MacIntyre (1988a, pp.206-207) maintains that in Aquinas' view, we should counterpoise authorities against each other to identify the limitations of each point of view. This indicates that we are not trapped in what we are taught in our conceptual schemes or by an authority, and that we have the capacity to compare them with other accounts formed in other conceptual schemes.

Though MacIntyre from time to time has underscored the internality of the standards of rational justification to traditions, he insists on the possibility and necessity of rational dialogue between traditions (1988a, p.387). He opposes the view that claims to rationality should be assessed only internally. This view is clear in his objection to the fideistic justification of religion, arguing that he no longer thinks, as he once used to

do with Karl Barth, we should try "to fence off the area of religious belief and practice from the rest of my life, by treating it as *a sui generis* form of life, with its own standards internal to it" (1994c, p.142).

In fact, MacIntyre's emphasis on the notion of tradition, despite the existence of some ideas to the contrary such as his objections to the idea of human rights or to the liberal idea of neutrality, is so non-conservative that it has prompted some theorists to think that his distinction from modern liberalism is blurred. W. Kymlicka (1989, pp.56-57), for example, argues that, since in MacIntyre's view, the self does not have to accept the moral limitations of its community, and that it can rebel against its identity, "it is not clear how his view is any different from the liberal individualist one he claims to reject". In the same vein, J. Porter (1993, p.516) remarks that "once MacIntyre's theory of rationality and truth is seen in its proper intellectual context, it is apparent that it both presupposes and lends support to the classical liberal virtues of tolerance and openness to pluralism." The liberal interpretation of MacIntyre, in my view, conflicts with the bulk of MacIntyre's rhetoric which is against the Enlightenment, modernism and Liberalism.

Indeed, MacIntyre's account of the virtues sometimes takes on a revolutionary aspect rather than a conservative one. This revolutionary aspect stems from MacIntyre's opposition to the reduction of the teleological account of the virtues to a functional account. The latter is, for instance in E. L. Pincoffs' view, a conservative account. Pincoff (1986) defines the virtues of persons as "qualities of their functioning well in a way which is 'appropriate to the common life', a common life within which different individuals and groups will pursue a range of different ends" (Pincoff 1986, pp.6-7, cited in MacIntyre 1988b, p.1). MacIntyre opposes Pincoff's account of the virtues, holding that "those qualities which have the best claim to be accounted virtues may be and are dysfunctional to and disruptive of certain types of social and cultural order" (1988b, p.2).

What sort of social and cultural order are the virtuous committed to overthrow? In MacIntyre's view, it is the kind of social order that is based

on the Humean picture of morality rather than on the Aristotelian one. The explanation is that for Hume, MacIntyre (1988b, p.10) maintains, the virtue of temperance does not involve the transformation of our desires; it only consists of restraints on our "over-indulgence in pleasures for the sake of utility"; whereas for Aristotle, "*sophrosune*" or temperance not only restrains certain pleasures, but also consists in educating and altering the capacities for pleasure and pain (1988b, p.5). From this Aristotelian perspective, temperance that consists in the education of desires is required for *phronesis*, which is practical reasoning (1988b, p.5). This education is directed toward the human good, and not necessarily toward preserving any social system in which the virtues are operating. Accordingly, the life of virtue might require overthrowing a social setting that poses threats to human flourishing. A feature of such a social setting is its gross inequality; as MacIntyre puts it:

> Aristotle pointed out long ago that a rational polity is one that cannot tolerate too great inequalities, because where there are such, citizens cannot deliberate together rationally. They are too divided by their sectional interests, so that they lose sight of their common good (2011, p.13).

Accordingly, MacIntyre's insistence on the role of the virtues in practical reasoning, and on the significance of apprenticeship does not always lead to a conformist attitude. This revolutionary attitude is both related to his Aristotelianism, as was explained above, and to his Marxism. MacIntyre from his earlier Marxist perspective argued that revolution against capitalism is necessary for winning freedom:

> The individual then cannot win his freedom by asserting himself against society; and he cannot win it through capitalist society. To be free is only possible in some new form of society which makes a radical break with the various oppressions of capitalism. Thus the topic of freedom is also the topic of revolution ([1960] 2008, p.130).

As K. Knight (2011, pp.20-21) points out, MacIntyre's theory of practice involves the critical scrutiny of the exercise of power in practices, and this shows that MacIntyre's account of apprenticeship is far away from

the moral arbitrariness of moral masters. This critical scrutiny occurs on the basis of the internal goods of practices, which are not formed or changed arbitrarily. MacIntyre's moral theory, in fact, gains a subversive aspect when it faces a social setting that is not suitable for the life of virtue, as is the case in MacIntyre's view with modern culture:

> What the morality of the virtues articulated in and defended by the moral rhetoric of our political culture provides is, it turns out, not an education in the virtues but, rather, an education in how to seem virtuous, without actually being so (1991a, p.14).

The picture of the virtues as habits of the mind and character presented earlier in this chapter might misleadingly indicate that anything into which people are educated in a particular context that produces a kind of habit could count as a virtue. However, in MacIntyre's Aristotelian and Thomistic view, agents are not neutral regarding what they receive from their social settings. They have capacities and inclinations for the good; this capacity itself is not the product of social settings; rather, it will become realized in appropriate social settings through apprenticeship and training; however, this training should be compatible with human beings' capacities.

To sum up this response to the charge of moral arbitrariness, masters are only means for educating novices. They themselves are subject to moral appraisal by independent practical reasoners. This position of MacIntyre's, which distinguishes him from conservative communitarianism, is consistent with his espousal of the natural law tradition according to which a human being has a nature that requires a particular morality for its flourishing. This flourishing might not occur in just any cultural and social setting.

In this section I attempted to explain the CT based on the function of traditions in the definition and practice of the virtues. The notion of the common good in traditions, as was discussed in the previous chapter, makes the objective justification and practice of the virtues possible. In this section, I emphasized the role of the education of desires in exercising practical reasoning. Practical reasoning occurs in the framework of some pre-rational reordering in moral agents, which can later be subject to moral

89

and rational reflection. I also discussed how MacIntyre's view regarding the constitution of practical reasoning by the virtues is not a conservative account, and it indeed becomes subversive when it faces a social setting that is not suitable for the life of virtue. In the next section, I will explain the CT based on the methodological function of traditions.

II.3.3 The CT Based on the Methodological Function of Traditions

The third way to explain the CT is by the methodological function of traditions, which consist in the ways that traditions, as traditions of intellectual and moral enquiry, direct enquiries within themselves. Without the contingent starting-points provided by traditions the enquirers would have no place to begin their enquiries about either their traditions or the world. Based on this view, MacIntyre (1988a, p.354) holds that the rationality of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry is a matter of the progress that is occurring in a tradition; a tradition whose life and enquiries begin from "some condition of pure historical contingency, from the beliefs, institutions, and practices of some particular community which constitute a given."

The term "constitute", which appeared in the quote above, denotes the relation between the methodological function of traditions and the CT. The relation is that traditions constitute the starting-points, as well as the standards of justification and progress, for the enquiries that are occurring in them; however, in my view, "constitute" in this sense should be far less robust in meaning than it is in the first two senses associated with conceptual schemes and the virtues explained above. This issue will be spelled out later in this section.

MacIntyre's emphasis on starting enquiries from contingent starting-points indicates his difference from the Cartesian and the Enlightenment's modes of enquiry, as understood by him. MacIntyre (1988a, pp.251-252), contrary to the Enlightenment's view, emphasizes the relevance of first principles to the conceptual schemes in which these first principles are working, and denies that there are first principles whose evidence can be known by all rational human beings irrespective of the traditions in which

the theories are formed. As MacIntyre (1988a, p.252) writes, "the evidentness of those principles is always relative to the conceptual scheme which that particular theory embodies and by its success or failure vindicates or fails to vindicate."

By contrast, from a Cartesian perspective all rational enquiries should start from necessary and indubitable principles; in MacIntyre's view (2006f, p.147), there are no such substantial first principles. There might be some formal logical rules, like the law of non-contradiction, which are necessarily true, but they are insufficient for building a substantial body of theory. We need substantial principles, which should of course conform to the formal rules of logic, but their substantive character belies the idea that they could be immediately evident to everybody, just because substantial principles might vary from tradition to tradition.

In MacIntyre's account (1988a, p.360), first principles, themselves, like the whole structures in which they are operating, require justification; but this is to be accomplished historically and dialectically by showing their rational superiority to their predecessors and rivals:

> They [first principles] are justified in so far as in the history of this tradition they have, by surviving the process of dialectical questioning, vindicated themselves as superior to their historical predecessors. Hence such first principles are not self-sufficient, self-justifying epistemological first principles. They may indeed be regarded as both necessary and evident, but their necessity and their evidentness will be characterizable as such only to and by those whose thought is framed by the kind of conceptual scheme from which they emerge as a key element... (1988a, p.360).

The key point here is that first principles require justification. This is against the modern commonsensical and the Cartesian view of first principles according to which the principles that are justificatory should finally be based upon self-evident first principles which do not need further justification.

MacIntyre's reason to think otherwise is that first principles for him include substantial statements that are accorded priority in the knowledge-

process; but as they are substantial, in the sense that they are informative about the world, they cannot be justified analytically, like the rules of logic, and without reference to features of the world.

J. Porter (2003, p.51) explains MacIntyre's account of first principles by stating that for him first principles are logical and conceptual but not epistemic, which means for him, the claims of a completed science in fact logically and conceptually follow from its first principles, but "this may not be apparent until the science actually is completed, and the relation of its various claims is rendered perspicuous."

Porter here points to MacIntyre's anti-epistemological account of first principles. His account is anti-epistemological, since these principles are substantive, and so do not have "the kind of justified immediate certitude" of an "epistemological starting point". MacIntyre is against the notion of epistemological first principles, and describes them as "mythological beasts" (2006f, p.147).

MacIntyre's notion of first principles is inspired by Aquinas' account which will be explained in the next chapter, according to which first principles include substantive principles, and refer to the metaphysical features of the subject; for instance, the predicate of rationality for human beings refers to some metaphysical counterpart in human beings' natures, which explains the necessity of the truth of the proposition "a human being is a rational animal". These principles are not epistemologically first in the sense that we should and could know them from the beginning, and that all other propositions in the area of knowledge in question can be derived from them; rather, the point is that when we know the nature of the object we conclude that the predicate holds true for the object. First principles are metaphysical, in the sense that they refer to the real natures of objects; they are teleological, since they are first principles of practical rationality and concern the sphere of morality which is teleological for Aquinas, meaning that they refer to some real and fixed ends for the world including human beings. These can be used for the evaluation of individual choices.

"Genuine first principles", in MacIntyre's Thomistic view, should have factual counterparts by reference to which they get their substance:

> This contemporary universe of discourse [the modern account of first principles which MacIntyre criticizes] thus has no place within it for any conception of fixed ends, of ends to be discovered rather than decided upon or invented, ... Genuinely first principles, so I shall argue, can have a place only within a universe characterized in terms of certain determinate, fixed and unalterable ends, ends which provide a standard by reference to which our individual purposes, desires, interests and decisions can be evaluated as well or badly directed. For in practical life it is the *telos* which provides the *arche,* the first principle of practical reasoning ... (2006f, p.146).

A question for this account of first principles might arise as follows. If first principles are metaphysical and substantial, such that they will be discovered at the end of our enquiries, why are they called "first" principles, rather than final principles? By answering this question, MacIntyre points to the difference between the Cartesian and the Aristotelian/Thomistic accounts of first principles. The point is that, in my terms, in the Aristotelian/Thomistic account the word "first" in the phrase "first principles" does not convey the timing of our awareness of the truth of first principles; rather, it points to the conceptually fundamental position that a first principle as a matter of fact has in our thinking; a position which we might become aware of later in our thinking-process.

This view of first principles is based on Aristotle's contention in *Posterior Analytics*, where he argues that "it is difficult to discern whether one knows or not" (cited in MacIntyre (2006f, p.149)). Aquinas, MacIntyre (2006f, p.149) narrates, interprets this as that it is difficult to discern whether or not we know from appropriate principles. In this view, one may genuinely know without yet having knowledge of the first principles upon which that knowledge is based, as MacIntyre puts the point:

> All knowledge even in the initial stages of enquiry is a partial achievement ... we can know without as yet knowing that we know that we know, while for the Cartesian, as I remarked earlier, if we know, we must know

that we know, since for the Cartesian it is always reference backwards to our starting-point that guarantees our knowledge and, hence, it is only through knowing that we know that we know that we know. By contrast, for the Thomist our present knowledge involves reference forward to that knowledge of the *arche/principium* which will, if we achieve it, give us subsequent knowledge of the knowledge that we now have (2006f, p.149).

MacIntyre's point is that we might come to know first principles in the course of enquiries by subjecting our current knowledge to revision and completion. When we have a fuller account of objects, and the mind is more adequate to these objects, we come closer to attaining knowledge of particular first principles that we have been employing in our knowledge-process without knowing them explicitly.

To return to the CT, MacIntyre's account of first principles is related to the constitution thesis in its methodological sense. The explanation is that, as was argued above, first principles for MacIntyre include substantive principles the evidence for which is not initially known by every mind. Given that there are not any universal substantive first principles to move enquirers forward, they should start from contingent starting-points they come across in their traditions, and then progress using a dialectical and fallibilistic method; as MacIntyre (1988a, p.361) puts it:

Traditions fail the Cartesian test of beginning from unassailable evident truths; not only do they begin from contingent positivity, but each begins from a point different from that of the others...Traditions are always and ineradically (sic: ineradicably) to some degree local, informed by particularities of language and social and natural environment.

While in demonstration we move from first principles toward subordinate truths, in dialectic we move from what is agreed contingently toward first principles (1990a, p.88-89). The CT in the methodological sense is related to this dialectical method, since we start our enquiries through a step by step questioning of contingent beliefs, to see what would finally survive this sifting process. These contingent beliefs and positions

94

are provided by traditions, and to some extent determine the direction of our enquiries. They also provide us with the norms that we need for our evaluations in our enquiries. These norms and starting-points themselves could and should be subject to evaluation, but the important issue is that, in MacIntyre's view, we cannot question all of them at once; as he puts it, "To say to oneself or to someone else 'Doubt all your beliefs here and now' without reference to historical or autobiographical context is not meaningless; but it is an invitation not to philosophy, but to mental breakdown, or rather to philosophy as a means of mental breakdown" (2006a, pp.12-13).

Indeed, we use both demonstrative and dialectical methods in our enquiries, but unless we start from substantial contingent points, demonstration cannot move us forward. Demonstration works in a context of some substantial principles; otherwise, formal rules like the law of non-contradiction cannot move the enquiry forward. We apply these rules to the sets of received beliefs the truths of which will be assessed according to the best standards that have appeared so far in the context of the tradition:

> The participant in a craft is rational *qua* participant in so far as he or she conforms to the best standards of reason discovered so far, and the rationality in which he or she thus shares is always, therefore, unlike the rationality of the encyclopaedic mode, understood as a historically situated rationality, even if one which aims at a timeless formulation of its own standards … (1990a, p.65).

The role that is played by these contingent points in directing theoretical and practical enquiries underlies MacIntyre's objection to what he thinks is the liberal ideal of impartiality and abstraction from particularities as a condition of rationality (1988a, p.3). Indeed, in MacIntyre's view, contrary to the notion of neutrality, enquiries about justice and other virtues assume a view of human nature and its good. A theory of virtue (1991a, p.9) in order to be sufficiently determinate cannot be neutral with regard to rival accounts of human nature and the good, and yet sufficiently determinate and substantial. There are Aristotelian, Stoic, Humean, Kantian, and Utilitarian accounts of the virtues, among others,

which hold rival views of human nature and the good, and so there are different views of genuine and counterfeit virtues. Each of these views leads to a particular system of moral education and enquiry (1991a, p.9).

Two questions arise regarding MacIntyre's anti-epistemological account of first principles. The first concerns the relation between this account and his fallibilism, which will be explained in chapters 3 and 4. The question is that if we do not start our enquiries from a knowledge of first principles, this—as will be explained more in the next chapter—would set some limits for the discursive nature of a true and rational theory upon which MacIntyre has laid emphasis, because discursive and fallibilistic reasoning requires having access to reasons and subjecting these reasons to revision and argumentation; while MacIntyre in his account of first principles holds that we initially lack knowledge of the knowledge we have. If we lack knowledge of first principles, we might not be able, at least at the beginning of our enquiries when we lack this explicit knowledge, to enter into discussions regarding the truth and adequacy of these principles.

The second question is that Aquinas, as referred to above, insists on a metaphysical understanding of first principles that relies on grasping the quiddity and natures of objects, which as will be argued in the next chapter, assumes a very epistemologically optimistic view. What a thing's quiddity is, whether there is such a thing, and how we can know it are contentious issues. It would be difficult to rationally achieve an agreement about human beings' nature and good. To solve this problem, I will argue in the final chapter that we would better justify morality on the basis of the requirements of human beings' normal and desirable functioning, which is distinct from a functioning directed toward the human good. By this, we can avoid the disputes over human beings' essence.

To return to my argument concerning the CT based on the methodological function, MacIntyre holds the standards of rationality and progress of traditions are justified historically by reference to their relative merits compared to their predecessors and rivals (1990a, p.64). This suggests that MacIntyre's CT, in this third and methodological sense, is

fallibilistic, and requires the constant subjection of our theories to revision and falsification. In other words, the fact that our theories are methodologically constituted in a tradition does not necessarily make them always true and beyond criticism. We need these contingently given points to begin our enquiries, but it is possible to reflect critically on the theories and bodies of thought built upon them, as well as on the principles themselves. In fact, MacIntyre (1988a, p.358) holds that traditions, when they develop and are able to achieve more adequate accounts of things than their own earlier accounts, are "to greater or lesser degree a form of enquiry". Being a form of enquiry suggests that a tradition is and should be open to other ways of enquiry; nevertheless, as pointed out above, MacIntyre's anti-epistemological view of first principles might set some limits for the possibility of reflection on first principles when we lack an explicit knowledge of them, because these principles refer to some contingent points in traditions, which other traditions might not share. If we uphold some first principles that refer to human basic aspects and needs, instead of human essence and the good, we can have some shared starting-points to evaluate different traditions.

In line with the methodological function of traditions, MacIntyre (1998d, p.121) holds that rationality is *prima facie* an attribute of social orders, and not of individuals *qua* individuals. Individuals as participants in social orders that embody some particular measures of rationality are able to evaluate themselves and others as rational or irrational.

Practices in communities are rule-governed, and rationality in each practice means abiding by the rules that are recognized in that practice, like the practice of farming or mathematics (1998d, p.121). Practices have internal goods, and rationality in them is defined in terms of the regulations that guide agents toward those goods; in other words, rationality should honour the virtues and the goods of practices. As MacIntyre (1998d, p.121) puts it, "to learn to be rational is to be initiated into and trained in the habits of action and judgement which dispose one to be so moved" in practices.

When the notion of practice reaches the stage of narrative and tradition the notion of the good would become the final measure of practical rationality. MacIntyre (1981, p.v) notes that since people in modern times do not share a notion of the good, moral philosophy has become stalemated over its task of providing rational justification for morality. This is because for modern morality the individual *qua* individual independent of social orders and communities has become the centre of theorizing.

This view of MacIntyre's regarding the relation between rationality and social contexts is inspired by Marx's and Marxists' contentions with respect to the relation between theories and practices; as MacIntyre (1995, p.xxix) puts it:

> [What Christian theologians] had failed to focus upon sufficiently was the insistence by both Marx and Marxists on the close relationships of theory to practice, on how all theory, including all theology, is the theory of some mode or modes of practice. ... Detach any type of theorizing from the practical contexts in which it is legitimately at home, whether scientific, theological or political, and let it become a free-floating body of thought and it will be all too apt to be transformed into an ideology.

MacIntyre's view that rationality is defined in practices bears some similarity with Wittgenstein's argument against a private language offered in *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) parts §§244–271. Wittgenstein's main point here is that it is impossible to have a language that is only intelligible to its originator, and not to any other audience, because if the language is not in principle public, its originator cannot establish meaning for its signs. Meaning is not a matter of individual's internal awareness; rather it depends on the knowledge of the proper use of the terms within a language-game.

I will here briefly sketch MacIntyre's resemblance to Wittgenstein, as this is related to the methodological function of traditions which I am explaining here. One point of similarity between the two is seen in MacIntyre's view explained above that rationality is a matter of collective and social life. There is no notion of a private rationality, just as there is no

98

notion of a private language. Rationality is a matter of respecting the rules that are socially acknowledged as rules. An individual cannot invent rules if they are not later sanctioned by some others to be acted upon.

MacIntyre (1957, p.177) invokes Wittgenstein's argument against a private language in order to reject the protestant theological idea that religious languages are meaningful only to believers who have had a religious experience. He presents and criticizes Karl Barth as holding that the Bible's assertions are meaningless to those who have not received "a special miracle of grace"; in the same vein, MacIntyre (1957, p.176) interprets Schleiermacher as holding that the statement "God created the world" points to believers' inner experience of absolute dependence on God. Contrary to this, MacIntyre (1957, p.177) maintains that if religious statements are expressed in a language, they should obey the rules of that language, which are essentially public and can be taught and learnt; as he puts it:

> It is not that we have private experiences and invent words for them. But we learn the words and find their application in our experience. The language is in a sense prior to—and even, although this could be misleading, in a sense formative of—the experience. This is as true of religious language as of any other (1957, p.177).

MacIntyre (1957, p.178) concludes that "most religious language … is of a thoroughly familiar kind [in that] theologians and believers generally want to assert some things, to deny others. But where everything is nonsense, there can be neither assertion nor denial." In other words, being sensible or not is not a private matter.[15]

MacIntyre also takes an explicitly Wittgensteinian approach based on the rejection of a private language in his essay "Colors, Cultures, and Practices" (2006b). MacIntyre there appeals to Wittgenstein's notion of

---

[15] It is possible here to object to MacIntyre that taking a religious language as only meaningful to a group of believers who have particular religious experiences does not render that language as a private language; because private language means a language for a solitary person not for a group of people. The believers in this group can communicate with each other as their religious experiences bear some similarities, and this would be enough for having a language.

rule-governed games to explain why we cannot have personal colour-judgments. The main point here is that we learn from others in practices and through apprenticeship the correct definition and application of colours. A solitary individual cannot have intelligible colour-judgments, because one condition for intelligible utterances and actions is that others be able to understand and know how to respond to them. Individual colour-judgments, like other kinds of judgments, need corroboration and correction on the part of others to achieve impersonality (2006b, pp.30-32).

Another resemblance between the two is in MacIntyre's anti-epistemological interpretation of Aquinas' theory of knowledge and truth—including his account of first principles—which was explained above, and will be elaborated further in the next chapter. The point here is that, as R. S. Smith (2003, p.40) points out, both Wittgenstein and MacIntyre are against the Cartesian method of providing certitude for an isolated and solitary human mind. The problem with this method in MacIntyre's view is that, as explained earlier in this chapter, substantive first principles about the world and human beings cannot be known from the beginning of intellectual enquiries; rather, they are the outcomes of fallible dialectical method, and are always open to revision and refutation. Individuals should start with the given points of departure in their traditions, and then critically reflect on these points to arrive at more adequate accounts of things. However, we should note that MacIntyre adopts a realist theory of truth that cannot be interpreted along the lines of philosophy after the linguistic turn. In his view, there is a real world whose features are independent of our thoughts and language, and act as the measures of truth (2006g, p.190). A fuller exposition of MacIntyre's theory of truth will be offered in chapter 4.

To sum up this section, I sought to elucidate the third sense of the CT, which is a methodological one. I argued that by this aspect of the CT, MacIntyre points to the notion of rationality as a progress from historically contingent beliefs toward what dialectically and demonstratively will turn out to be more adequate accounts than their rivals. This is an account that can stand up, better than can its rivals, to close scrutiny in light of the best

100

available standards. The surviving principles, which serve foundational roles in the premises of practical reasoning, would be first principles the evidence of which is not known by all rational agents. This discursive and dialectical reasoning is also reflected in MacIntyre's fallibilism which will be explained in the next chapter. Nevertheless, this anti-epistemological account raises questions for MacIntyre's discursive method, as will also be discussed in the next chapter. I also pointed to MacIntyre's criticism of the notion of a private language, in which he emphasizes the connection of norms of rationality with practices. After this exposition of MacIntyre's view, I will turn to some criticism related to his CT.

II.3.4 A Criticism of MacIntyre's Account of the Notion of Neutrality

The notion of impartiality as defended by people like John Rawls in his *A Theory of Justice* (1971) has been criticized by the proponents of community and communitarianism like M. Sandel and MacIntyre; however, I think MacIntyre has proffered a "straw man" picture of the liberal account of impartiality which is very easy to reject.

As was argued above with regard to MacIntyre's criticism of the Enlightenment, the liberal ideal involves, in MacIntyre's view (1988a, p.3), detaching individuals from all their particularities to make them neutral as a condition to formulate universal rules of practical reasoning and justice. This presentation of the ideal of neutrality is blind to the distinction between ontological and normative detachment in Rawls' view, or to such an interpretation of him, according to which this detachment is meant to be normative and not ontological;As Rawls (1993, p.24) puts it,

> The fact that we occupy a particular social position is not a good reason for us to propose, or to expect others to accept, a conception of justice that favors those in this position. Similarly, the fact that we affirm a particular religious, philosophical, or moral comprehensive doctrine with its associated conception of the good is not a reason for us to propose, or expect others to accept, a conception of justice that favors those of that persuasion.

101

Rawls' point here is that although we are inevitably situated in a particular social position, and are associated with a notion of the good, we should have the normative and intellectual capacity to consider others' associations; our sense of justice requires us to apply this capacity in our relationships with others. This view does not deny our ontological situatedness; it, rather, refers to the capacity for considering others' notion of the good and their right to pursue those notions. Moral agents, whatever their theories of the good, have the capacity to think from the perspectives of other agents who have different accounts of the good. This does not mean that the agents should in fact detach themselves from their loyalties; rather, they as moral and reasonable agents can conceive what life from other perspectives means and requires, and so they as reasonable agents should give consent to live with others under fair and equal terms.

In fact, I believe MacIntyre employs the same approach in his notion of "the second first language" (1988a, p.374), and in his metaphor of role-playing, which will be explained in chapter 4. MacIntyre's point there is that it is different to play a role and to live the role in real life, but the role-player, when he is playing the role, has the capacity to understand the requirements of a given role (1988a, p.395). By the same token, in my view, it is possible to consider being in Rawls' original position to formulate the rules of justice as a role that competent moral agents, irrespective of their comprehensive theories of the good, are capable of assuming. MacIntyre (1988a, p.395) also employs a similar approach in his argument against perspectivism by stating that individuals are capable of understanding others in the latter's own terms. This understanding does not require ontological detachment from all particular notions of the good, which is impossible; rather, it requires that people consider the requisites of life on the basis of other notions of the good as a condition of reasonableness. MacIntyre himself affirms this transcending capacity for the individual as follows.

> This capacity for recognition of the self as being already to some degree at home in some tradition sharply differentiates this kind of person and this kind of encounter with a tradition of enquiry from the person who finds him

102

or herself an alien to every tradition of enquiry which he or
she encounters … (1988a, p.395).

The point that the self can be at home in alien traditions does not mean
that it should discard all its existing beliefs and values; rather, it points to
the normative and intellectual capacity on the part of the individual to
understand different notions of the good life and their requirements as are
understood by their proponents.

By this argument for the idea of reasonableness, I mean to suggest that
the particularity of moral agents cannot bar them from envisaging basic
structures that can accommodate people with different theories of the good.
Accordingly, if it is the case that we need to move dialectically toward the
first principles of practical reasoning from contingent positions of our own
tradition, we need also to nurture a moral capacity in ourselves to
understand the requirements of practical rationality based on particular
positions different from ours. As a result, we need to include the principles
of reasonableness and fair cooperation among our first principles of
practical rationality and justice, particularly when there is no prospect of
living under a shared substantial theory of the good. Accordingly,
MacIntyre's notion of the CT should not be understood in such a way that
denies this normative and intellectual capacity to the individual. In the next
chapter on Aquinas' theory of knowledge, I will argue that Aquinas' view
of the intellect, in fact, requires holding such a transcending capacity for the
self.

II.3.5 Considering other Terminologies for the CT that Convey Better MacIntyre's Intention

After explaining the three possible meanings of the CT, I claimed that
the CT in its first sense, which is counterpart to the function of traditions as
conceptual schemes, might conduce to the misunderstanding of MacIntyre's
point by suggesting a relativistic account of his thought. I argued in the
previous chapter that MacIntyre is not straightforward in his description of
traditions as conceptual schemes. The reason is that he sometimes denies

103

substantiality to moral agents *qua* individuals, and insists that moral substantiality holds for individuals only in so far as they are located in traditions and assume social roles (1983a, p.454). Furthermore, I argued in the previous chapter that MacIntyre holds moral agency is not limited to the fulfillment of social requirements, and requires the discharging of responsibilities *qua* human beings. This latter position, unlike the former, is consistent with and required by a natural law tradition that is based on the existence of a shared essence in humankind as the basis of morality, or at least with the view that there is some meaning to humanity independently of social settings. Ironically, the wording of the CT, i.e. the terms "constituted" and "constitutive", is more suggestive of the first sense of the CT, that is, the self totally owes its moral capacity to its social and cultural setting, and so might lead to misunderstandings of the kind that I have described.

Accordingly, in my view, MacIntyre should consider using other terminologies to convey better what he means by this thesis. The problem with the first sense of the CT is that it might portray agents as being constituted in different traditions to the extent that they are closed entities and unable to communicate and learn from those in other traditions. This view of the CT is at odds with MacIntyre's method of epistemological crisis, his fallibilistic method, and also his attachment to the natural law tradition, which will be explained further in chapters 3 and 4.

Among the expressions that might better convey MacIntyre's intention here we can consider "tradition-guided rationality", "tradition-directed rationality" or "tradition-related rationality". The term constitution is too robust for MacIntyre's purpose. These alternative expressions suggest that traditions provide conceptual, methodological and moral guidance for their advocates, but do not limit them to the resources of those traditions. The terminology of the CT is more in tune with the conservative communitarianism explained in the present chapter, from which MacIntyre has distanced himself.

MacIntyre's CT raises questions about its relation to the notions of truth, relativism and perspectivism. The question emerges regarding

whether traditions can hold truth-claims; if they do, what is MacIntyre's account of truth, and what is its relation to the CT? In other words, if rationality is constituted in traditions, can those people who are working in these traditions espouse a realist theory of truth which MacIntyre has adopted according to which the measure of truth is correspondence to reality? Before devoting a chapter to such questions, and since MacIntyre appeals to Aquinas' theory of truth, by way of introduction I shall assign the next chapter to Aquinas' theory of truth as understood and employed by MacIntyre.

II.3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to explain MacIntyre's CT by exploring its different meanings in relation to traditions' functions. With regard to the role of traditions as conceptual schemes, I argued that different moral conceptual schemes may be differentiated on the basis of their different views of human nature and the good, which produce different structures of practical rationality and different meanings for the virtues. I contrasted the polar positions of the goods of excellence and effectiveness which correspond respectively to Aristotelian and Humean practical rationality. I suggested that the term "constitution" suits best this conceptual explanation, as it can explain well the strict distinction between different versions of practical rationality; however, this might lead to a misunderstanding of MacIntyre by suggesting a pluralistic-relativistic-conservative interpretation of his work from which, as was noted, MacIntyre has distanced himself.

With regard to the role of the virtues, I argued that practical training leads to the development of moral traits in moral agents, which instruct them to use moral rules correctly in particular situations. This practical knowledge, in MacIntyre's view, cannot be reduced to *a priori* moral principles that work in different contexts of practical life. Practical reasoning involves practical intelligence which cannot be adequately treated in terms of procedural practical rationality. This aspect of the CT, MacIntyre holds, is at odds with the Kantian account of practical rationality, and points to MacIntyre's virtue-ethics and virtue-epistemology.

With regard to the methodological function of traditions, I explained MacIntyre's view of first principles which, as they include substantial principles, cannot correctly be described as self-evident without qualification. They are evident for minds that have been formed in particular conceptual schemes. Traditions of moral enquiry begin dialectically with substantial contingent beliefs. After subjecting them to constant questions and objections, they arrive at some basic substantial principles which are in fact the foundation of those beliefs. These contingent starting-points constitute and direct intellectual and moral enquiries in the context of different traditions. In MacIntyre's view (1988a, p.354), rationality consists of progress in successive phases of a tradition. Tradition in a given phase is rational if it goes beyond the limits of its earlier phases. We cannot extract the beliefs of a tradition at a specific stage of its progress, and assess their rationality according to some independent and objective measures. It is a major theme of MacIntyre's thought that traditions should be evaluated according to their own standards; however, as will be argued in chapter 4 on his theory of truth, this does not entail that traditions will always be vindicated in light of their own standards. As related to this methodological sense, I argued that for MacIntyre measures of rationality should have been acknowledged as such in social practices in order to count as such measures, as it is the case with the rules of the game of chess.

The three functions which I have described work in tandem, and in a sense correct each other, to explain MacIntyre's CT. Based on the account that I provided above, traditions in the ideal sense are consistent conceptual schemes which promote the life of virtue, as a condition for practical rationality, and provide starting-points and guiding procedures for enquiries. Ignoring one of these functions leads to misunderstanding MacIntyre on the part of other functions; for instance, placing excessive emphasis on traditions as conceptual schemes or lives of virtue leads us to overlook MacIntyre' point regarding inter-traditional intellectual exchanges.

In sum, the CT explained in this chapter consists of two halves, which are tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality. The first half

conveys that there are pre-rational elements, which determine the structures of rationalities and are constituted in traditions as moral features of agents, or as contingent historical starting-points. These pre-rational elements and first principles of practical rationality can be evaluated later on the basis of the adequacy of the systems in which they are operating.

The second half of the CT, that is, tradition-constitutive rationality denotes that tradition-constituted rationalities themselves are features of their relevant traditions and represent them. In other words, tradition-constituted rationality points out that rationalities are formed in different traditions, and that there are internal measures for rationality, besides the universal formal rules of logic. Tradition-constitutive rationality, in turn, has an additional meaning compared to the first half of the constitution thesis; that is to say, these constituted rationalities in the long-term inform and sustain the traditions in which they have been formed. The CT, thus, provides an introduction to MacIntyre's discussion of justice; as he puts it,

> The discussion of the nature of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry has been undertaken not for its own sake but in order to arrive, so far as is possible, at a true account of justice and of practical rationality. The enquiry into justice and practical rationality was from the outset informed by a conviction that each particular conception of justice requires as its counterpart some particular conception of practical rationality and vice versa (1988a, p.389).

In this view, what justice requires is related to an account of practical rationality; for instance for Aristotle (*NE*, II-III), justice like other virtues lies in a mean between defect and excess. This view is related to an account of practical rationality according to which the man of practical knowledge has a determining role in defining the mean points. Clearly, this view is associated with a particular social and moral scheme in which the education of desires has a significant position.

I criticized MacIntyre in this chapter on three grounds. The first was that the terminology of the CT is too demanding for MacIntyre's purposes, and might lead to a misunderstanding of his views. The second was about

MacIntyre's criticism of the notion of neutrality, which as I explained does not take into account the distinction between normative and ontological impartiality. The third was that MacIntyre's emphasis on traditions' enquiries starting from their contingent points leaves unanswered the question of how we can assess these starting-points and first principles.

We should also note that MacIntyre's emphasis on an account of rationality as progress in a tradition is not limited to the tradition itself. Mere progress in a tradition and according to its own internal standards is not sufficient to qualify this progress as approaching truth[16], because— according to the natural law tradition advocated by MacIntyre—the facts of human nature posit some requirements that go beyond single traditions, and the tradition should be exposed to rival traditions to check the adequacy of its accounts. The assessment of a tradition in the light of an objective reality or rivals' accounts is related to MacIntyre's realist theory of truth which will be explained in the next two chapters. A major theme of MacIntyre's concerning his interpretation of Aquinas' theory of truth and knowledge is his espousal of fallibilism in reasoning. Fallibilism is closely related to the CT in its methodological sense, as both emphasize a gradual movement from particular points of view to more universal and adequate accounts by holding theories open to revision and refutation.

---

[16]Indeed, I think the mere progress of a tradition according to its internal measures is not a sufficient condition, neither for its truth nor for its rationality, As I will discuss in chapter 6, there are at least some minimal constraints that all traditions should comply with if they want to be rational and reasonable.

III- Chapter 3: MacIntyre's Account of Aquinas' Theory of Truth

III.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I discussed MacIntyre's account of tradition, the functions of traditions, and how each of these functions relates to his CT. The main theme of the CT, as was argued at length in the previous chapter, is that moral reasoning cannot be a form of reasoning in which the agent appeals just to universal rational procedures to determine what he ought to do. There should be, rather, some background elements against which sound practical reasoning occurs. This background includes the virtuous education of agents, and direction and guidance that traditions provide for enquiries. The rationality of these background elements is known only to the virtuous and to the wise, who have had their character educated and disciplined under the guidance of moral masters, or in their relationships with other more competent moral agents.

The chapters so far have dealt with MacIntyre's account of practical rationality. In this and the next chapter, I shall discuss his account of truth; accordingly, I am entering into a new phase of discussion whose relation to the former phase, which is rationality, needs some explanation. Before starting, I should clarify the relevance of this discussion about MacIntyre's theory of truth, and his interpretation of Aquinas' theory of truth, to the overall subject of my thesis. I need to add that the focus of my concern here is MacIntyre's account of rationality and truth with regard to morality, that is, practical rationality and a practical sense of truth.

The subject of my thesis is MacIntyre's tradition-constituted rationality and justice. The main issue that I should concern myself with is the way MacIntyre thinks traditions form and constitute different practical rationalities. This is what was dealt with largely in the previous two chapters on the different functions of traditions. A question that now surfaces is whether a tradition can take its own measures of rationality as superior to those of other traditions. The ultimate criterion of superiority in

this context, in MacIntyre's view, is correspondence to reality; in other words, a tradition can claim superiority for its substantive claims if it can show that these claims describe reality as it is better than do other traditions' claims. Accordingly, the question that arises after discussing the role of traditions in constituting rationalities is whether traditions are closed entities without the possibility to tell which one is a better and more adequate tradition; something which is, in MacIntyre's view, to be decided in terms of a correspondence relationship with a reality. Thus the issue of the rationality of different traditions inevitably leads to the issue of truth when we compare their measures of rationality in the realist framework that MacIntyre affirms according to which reality is independent of our mind and we should adjust our mental categories and theories to relate better to reality (2006h, p.207).

To claim a realist sense of truth for the outcomes of practical reason is not an easy claim. That moral oughts are more than our personal or conventional preferences which are valued in a particular community, and that they should be evaluated in the light of some reality, for instance a human essence as a reality that should flourish, is what we can infer from MacIntyre's account of truth in the field of morality. This suggests that for MacIntyre, contrary to philosophy after the linguistic turn, firstly reality is independent of our thought and our language, and secondly, this independent reality is perceptible as it is by us. Thus, the issue of rationality, including practical rationality, in MacIntyre's realist framework, links to the issue of truth, and understanding his account of truth will shed light on his account of rationality, at least, by clarifying his position that tradition-constituted rationality does not amount to relativism and perspectivism.

A second issue that should be explained is the necessity of discussing MacIntyre's interpretation of Aquinas' theory of truth in my project. Granted that MacIntyre's account of rationality is linked to his account of truth, I again need to explain the position of Aquinas in this trajectory, as MacIntyre explicitly adopts Aquinas' account of the correspondence theory of truth. I hope the reader will fully understand the point of this discussion

after reading this and the next chapter; however, I shall by way of introduction sketch the main points the fuller explanation of which will be provided through these two chapters.

MacIntyre explicitly upholds Aquinas' account of the correspondence theory of truth, and takes it to be different from and superior to modern versions of this theory. It is different from the modern account of the correspondence theory of truth in that the correspondence relation primarily obtains between the intellect and the object, not between propositions and facts. This then, as MacIntyre presents it, contributes to a fallibilistic and a gradualist account of truth by invoking the notion of the intellect's adequation. The intellect gradually becomes adequate to its object by being open to revision and refutation, which might even be initiated from a rival tradition. This view again indicates that traditions for MacIntyre are not closed entities that cannot learn from each other.

Another subject related to this gradualist view is a non-epistemological interpretation of first principles, which was explained in the foregoing chapter, and MacIntyre thinks is a true interpretation of Aquinas' thought. The kind of certitude which a Cartesian expects, in this view, might be acquired at the end of our enquiries for a mind which is formed in a tradition (2006f, p.148). After these introductory remarks, I shall, in more detail, discuss MacIntyre's interpretation of Aquinas' account of truth, as this interpretation is essentially related to MacIntyre's CT and his account of truth.

III.2 The Move from the Discussion of Rationality to That of Truth

MacIntyre (2006h, p.207) distinguishes between rationality and truth. Rationality for him is a matter of warranted assertibility according to which a theory is rational or warranted if it satisfies appropriate standards of its tradition at a particular stage. As contrasted with this, truth concerns how things are in the real word. The corollary of such a realist theory of truth is that, MacIntyre believes, we can transcend the conceptual scheme in which we are making our enquiries about the world to know the world as it is independent of our conceptual schemes and our thoughts (2006h, p.207).

Although MacIntyre thinks there is a difference between a theory of rationality and a theory of truth, he believes they are connected to each other. For MacIntyre the notion of truth is not totally captured by the notion of rationality; that is to say, what we take to be a rational account of something is not necessarily a true account; however, we should have some rational account from our own perspective, or alternatively, we should believe that it is, in principle, possible to offer such an account in the future, for what we take to be true. We as rational beings must have some reasons for our beliefs, i.e. what we take as true knowledge. This connection between the notions of rationality and truth partly underlies MacIntyre's espousal of Thomism, as I shall explain.

A question that arises is how MacIntyre bridges the gap between rationality and truth. In other words, in what circumstances we can claim that a rational account is a true account? MacIntyre here espouses Aquinas' theory of truth according to which the intellect is active, and should become adequate for its objects over time. The truth holds in the intellect's relation to the object for which it has become adequate. The adequate intellect has a fuller account of the object, and can explain its different aspects better than can other intellects or the same intellect in its previous stages. An adequate account can overcome intellectual impasses, and in addition, explain why its rivals have failed to do so, and how the rivals can remove their deficiencies in order to withstand these challenges (1990a, pp.145-146).For instance, in MacIntyre's view (1990a, pp.146), Thomism can provide us with a more adequate moral theory than can each of Aristotelianism, Augustinianism and particularly Liberalism, because it has gathered the positive points of the first two views, and so has transcended them, and can also explain how the liberal account of morality fails to justify morality, that is, partly as a consequence of rejecting the notion of the human final good.[17]

---

[17] I am aware that what is the most adequate account so far might turn out not to be true in the sense of correspondence with reality; however, I think MacIntyre's position here would be that we take that account as true in the above sense, until we find new conflicting evidence that casts doubt on its truth; but in the interim we should not be agnostic with regard to its truth, although we take it always open to revision and refutation.

MacIntyre (2006g, p.188) holds a condition for obtaining a state of adequacy is that the intellect and its accounts of objects be open to revision and falsification based on the best available standards. MacIntyre's theory of truth here approaches a Popperian account. When the intellect is adequate, which is in terms of the best standards of rationality in a tradition and also in inter-traditional encounters, this is a sign of the tentative truth of such an adequate account; that is to say, we can rationally claim that reality is as the theory describes, but the theory should remain open to revision and falsification at any time (2006g, p.188); and this is what I referred to above as the relation between rationality and truth.

Although MacIntyre's account of truth is general and applies to different kinds of objects including nature and factual objects, my main concern here with his theory of truth lies in his moral realism, i.e. his account of truth when it applies to the moral realm. I argued in the first chapter that MacIntyre is a cognitivist moral theorist, who thinks it is possible to speak of the truth of moral judgments as factual statements. This view is indeed required by his metaphysical interpretation of the natural law tradition according to which morality is related to facts about human nature, in such a way that moral judgments are a species of factual judgments. This does not mean that there are moral facts like external observational facts outside us, available to be used as parts of a realist theory of truth in morality; rather, it means that the observance of moral principles which are the precepts of the natural law leads to our real flourishing as human beings, and that this can be used as the measure of the truth of these moral judgments. For instance, from such a perspective, the proposition "killing an innocent person is wrong" is true not because we conventionally think it bad to kill the innocent; rather, its truth is due to the fact that our normal functioning as human beings, upon which our flourishing depends, enjoins the prohibition of this deed (2000, p.108). The failure to abide by this moral principle causes a factual state of affairs to exist, that is, an unfulfilled human nature, or an existing state of affairs that is not suitable for human beings' normal functioning.

113

MacIntyre's justification of moral principles is inspired by Aquinas who does not see a contradiction between divine revelation and reason. Reason is introduced by Aquinas as "a proper image" of the eternal law (*ST* I-II, Q. 19, Art. 4). This method is based on discursive reasoning which attempts to arrive at more adequate accounts of objects than do rival moral theories by holding theories open to revision. This method is seen in Aquinas' works in which he proposes a metaphysical or moral statement, then introduces different objections to it, and finally attempts to offer adequate answers to them.

III.3 MacIntyre's Interpretation of Aquinas' Theory of Truth as in Line with Fallibilism and the CT

I discussed above the relation between truth and rationality in MacIntyre's view. The relation is that truth for MacIntyre is partly an epistemic notion, which means we should have reason for the truth of what we take to be true.[18] This point pushes MacIntyre toward endorsing a fallibilism like that of C. S. Peirce and Karl Popper. What we take to be true should be capable of establishing its rational superiority in a process of revision and refutation over its rivals (2006g, p.188).

This epistemic interpretation of truth does not mean that what we have reason for might not turn out to be false in the future; rather, it requires that once the falsity of a hitherto true theory is exposed, we should be able to justify rationally the change from this view to a better one; that is to say, we should be able to show the inadequacies of the previous reasons and have more adequate reasons for the new theory than we had for the previous one.

True theories are arrived at by the best standards that have appeared so far in the history of a tradition and should withstand epistemological

---

[18]That MacIntyre's theory of truth is partly epistemic should not be conflated with his non-epistemological interpretation of first principles explained in the previous chapter. By his theory of truth as being epistemic, I mean that we should have reasons from our own perspective for what we take as true; but these reasons are not necessarily available to all rational agents across traditions, or are not adequately recognizable at the beginning of our enquiries. The qualification "partly" seems to dispel any contradiction between the two, as this refers to the limitations in the way of justification at the beginnings of enquiries or for agents outside a given tradition.

challenges that are made from outside the tradition. Based on this approach, MacIntyre holds that "corrigibility and refutability are necessary properties of any theory for which truth can be claimed" (2006g, p.187).

MacIntyre (2006g, p.187) contends that although Aquinas advocated dialectical reasoning in his theology, the central place of fallibilism, which MacIntyre takes to be a necessary property of any adequate theory of truth, was the contribution of non-Thomistic philosophers, especially C. S. Peirce and Karl Popper. In other words, though the roots of fallibilistic reasoning were present in Aquinas' dialectical thought, fallibilism in a full-fledged form only appeared later in modern times.

It is necessary here to consider the relation of the idea of fallibilism to the CT. To recall, I argued in the foregoing chapter that the CT is the view that there are pre-rational elements which are necessary for practical rationality. These elements are either moral agents' characters which are informed by the virtues, or the measures of rationality which are internal to traditions at different stages of their development. Fallibilism, thus, relates to the CT in this methodological sense, as it refers to the progress which offers in a tradition through revision and refutation.

If fallibilism originates from within a tradition, such that theories are open to falsification in light of new evidence in that tradition, clearly this notion is compatible with the CT, because in this case falsification is based on the resources of the tradition from which a theory has emerged, and so there is no problem with this falsification, because any tradition might generate new standards of rationality from within itself that might falsify its own previous truth-claims.

If fallibilism originates from outside a tradition, such that the bases of falsification are not derived from within the tradition but from outside and from alien traditions, this can still be construed as being compatible with the CT, if we do not mean by it a restriction to a tradition. MacIntyre employs a mechanism based on the notion of epistemological crisis to show how this inter-traditional fallibilism occurs; nevertheless, in my view he needs to allow the existence of some cross-traditional measures of rationality to

115

make this wider sense of fallibilism, which originates from outside a tradition, consistent with his CT; otherwise, if there are not tradition-transcending measures of rationality, a tradition may not see any convincing reason for subjecting itself to a correction that stems from outside itself.

For MacIntyre, even first principles of practical rationality, which are substantial rather than being self-evident due to their analytic nature, should be open to refutation, and they gain their justification by the comparative advantage of the system of thought, in which they are working, over its rivals (2006f, p.160). The view that first principles are open to revision differentiates MacIntyre's theory from that of another Thomist, Bernard Lonergan, who like MacIntyre thinks that a tradition-constituted rationality is compatible with Aquinas' thought and with the Thomistic tradition. M. P. Maxwell (1993, p.386) states the point as follows:

> Lonergan argues that these first principles of reason express the immanent norms constitutive of the rationality of all traditions of enquiry and, therefore, are not subject to revision. In other words, although they are tradition-constituted, they are also trans-traditionally normative.

MacIntyre's claim that his CT and a fallibilistic understanding of the notion of truth, which includes even the first principles of enquiries, are compatible with Thomism, has been criticized by several authors. Some critics, including R. P. George (1989) and J. Coleman (1994), have objected to MacIntyre at this point, stating that the fallibilism that he is reading into Thomism is not compatible with it, as there are eternal truths in Thomism that are thought to be irrefutable and accessible to all; as Coleman (1994, p.81) puts it, "a definition [for Aristotle and Aquinas] is not culture bound nor is it temporal. Both names and definitions which grasp the essence of a subject have no temporality." George (1989, p.593) similarly argues that MacIntyre's account of moral particularism, the view that there are different rationalities and justices in different traditions, is not compatible with Aquinas' account of evident truths which are available to all competent rational human beings. J. Haldane (1994, p.104) also raises the question whether MacIntyre's view of reason as being shaped and advanced through

116

traditions of enquiry is faithful to the character of Aquinas's epistemology and metaphysics. In Haldane's account (1994, p.105), MacIntyre's view (1990a, p.202) that "all claims to knowledge are the claims of some particular person, and are developed out of the claims of other particular persons", and they are possessed "only in and through participation in a history of dialectical encounters" might lead to a relativism that is at odds with Aquinas' thought. I will return to this line of criticism in the next chapter on the issue of relativism.

The quotes above indicate that MacIntyre's interpretation of Aquinas in which he attempts to accommodate his CT and his fallibilism, which is entailed by the CT in its methodological sense, with Aquinas' thought is a controversial enterprise and against the mainstream interpretation. The mainstream interpretation of Aquinas holds that there are eternal truths that are in principle accessible to all rational human beings.

Let us look briefly at this issue. There are, in Aquinas' view, universal principles of practical reason, as there are universal principles of speculative reason, which he calls the precepts of the natural law:

> ... to the natural law belong those things to which a man is inclined naturally: and among these it is proper to man to be inclined to act according to reason. The speculative reason is busied chiefly with necessary things, which cannot be otherwise than they are, its proper conclusions, like the universal principles, contain the truth without fail (*ST*, I.II, Q. 94, Art. 3).

As the quote indicates, Aquinas speaks of "a man" who is inclined naturally to the precepts of the natural law. These precepts are not incumbent only upon some groups of people in a tradition, or who have dialectically arrived at the truth of these precepts. Human beings in virtue of the natural light of their reason are expected to admit the truth of these practical principles, though—as MacIntyre himself (2006j, p.66) stresses— there remain, in Aquinas' view, places for occasional mistakes and lapses in knowing the details of the natural law; as Aquinas writes:

> Although there is necessity in the general principles [of practical reason], the more we descend to matters of detail,

117

the more frequently we encounter defects.... But in matters
of action, truth or practical rectitude is not the same for all,
as to matters of detail, but only as to the general principles
(*ST*, I.II, Q. 94, Art. 3).

Aquinas' view here conflicts with MacIntyre's CT if that thesis does
not admit any sort of universality regarding human beings' nature and
practical rationality. The natural law and human reason which is, in
Aquinas' terms, "a proper image of the eternal law" assume a universalistic
account of human nature and human reason. This view is at odds with a
thick interpretation of MacIntyre's CT. By a thick interpretation of the CT, I
mean the view that human beings independent of their social and cultural
locations are not substantial moral agents in the sense of having inherent
moral inclinations, or the view that denies the necessity of some norms for
human beings *qua* human beings required for their normal or desirable
functioning. As was explained in the preceding chapter, some parts of
MacIntyre's account of practical rationality move in this direction.

I do not deny the necessity of proper education and social contexts for
cultivating a moral sense in human beings; but, I seek to argue that this
moral sense is not the sole product of social conditions; in other words, it is
not the case that human beings are completely malleable beings and can be
shaped as social conditions require. Human nature certainly imposes some
limits upon this conditioning. For instance, we as human beings cannot
systematically value theft or murder, because these acts create conditions
that are destructive to human normal functioning. In the final chapter, I will
return to this issue, attempting to justify a morality that applies to human
beings as rational beings.

There is some evidence in MacIntyre's work to support a thick
interpretation of the CT, particularly when he (1983a, p.454) denies the
notion of the individual as a substantial moral agent independent of his
social setting as was discussed in the foregoing chapter, which I think is not
compatible with his account of the natural law tradition; however, the thrust
of MacIntyre's view is that, as I explained in the previous chapter, his CT

118

does not limit agents to the resources of their traditions (1988a, p.364); he also does accept the universality of the primary precepts of the natural law, though there remain qualifications regarding the application of these precepts (2009a, p.89). In the next chapter, I will also explain MacIntyre's method for inter-traditional exchanges, which is in line with his CT. Accordingly, MacIntyre should not be, in principle, opposed to the existence of some inter-traditional theoretical and practical truths, and this position can save him from the criticisms mentioned above concerning the compatibility of MacIntyre's thought with Aquinas'; nevertheless, MacIntyre needs to make this position more explicit. In what follows, I attempt to reconstruct MacIntyre's reasons for his fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas' theory of truth.

III.3.1 Possible Reasons for MacIntyre to Offer a Fallibilistic Interpretation of Aquinas' Theory of Truth

III.3.1.1 Aquinas' Argumentative and Dialectical Methodology

One reason for MacIntyre's fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas is Aquinas' argumentative and dialectical methodology. If we look at the style of Aquinas' arguments throughout his works, we notice the attention he pays to collecting different possible objections to his positions, and to replying to them compellingly. Using this method, Aquinas had, as MacIntyre argues, been able to transcend the limitations of Aristotle and Augustine by providing a synthesis of them, and in consequence a theory that was more adequate in various aspects such as the relation between human secular rationality and revealed truths, and the relation of free will and practical rationality. This methodology points out that an adequate theory should be open to all existing or possible criticisms, and be able to respond to them; as MacIntyre (1988a, p.172) puts the point:

> The length and detail of the *Summa* are not accidental features of it, but integral to its purpose and more particularly to providing both Aquinas himself and his readers with the assurance that the arguments adduced for particular articles were the strongest produced so far from any known point of view.

The emphasis on openness to different criticisms means that the theory should be revised or finally left aside if it cannot meet these challenges, and this is what is meant by fallibilism.

III.3.1.2 The Moral Aspect of Aquinas' Theory of Knowledge and Truth

Another reason for the fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas' thought is the moral aspect of Aquinas' theory of knowledge and truth. I discussed in the previous chapter that certain virtues are necessary for practical rationality. These virtues include the virtues of character and of intellect. One of the virtues of the intellect which MacIntyre (2006g, p.187) emphasizes as relevant to fallibilism is openness to difficulties and objections concerning our accepted beliefs. This virtue or habit of mind forms the basis of a fallibilistic approach in the knowledge-process. Being open to revision, which MacIntyre introduces here as a virtue, is a necessary condition for attaining an adequate knowledge of things.

MacIntyre (2006j, p.79) also holds that the precepts of the natural law are required for all shared practical enquiries, because enquirers need to observe them in order to retain intellectual impartiality in their enquiries; as he puts it:

> What is necessary in order to counter that influence [of material and psychological interests] is a form of intellectual and moral asceticism, both in our thinking and in the ways in which we invite others to assent to our theses and arguments. We need simultaneously to avoid allowing our own thinking to give expression to and so to be guided by our preferences and aversions and to abstain from a rhetoric that is designed to move others, not by the reasons adduced, but by the passions to which the utterance of those reasons gives expression (2006j, p.78).

That we should refrain from endangering "gratuitously each other's life, liberty or property" is a precept of the natural law, which requires the mutual commitment of participants in enquiries (2006j, p.78). Impartiality

in enquiries requires that a more adequate account be always preferred to a less adequate one:

> ...A more adequate understanding in respect of truth is always to be preferred to a less adequate, no matter how profitable it may be to remain with the less adequate or how painful it may be to exchange it for the more adequate (2006j, p.78).

This moral aspect also reflects itself in what MacIntyre calls the ethics of enquiry by which he means enquirers in turn should be given appropriate time and length to participate in a discussion, as is required by "justice in conversation", and that they in their discussions should attend to the substance of arguments and not to those who utter these arguments (1999c, p.6). MacIntyre also uses this notion of the ethics of enquiry against moral relativism, as will be explained in the next chapter.

Another way to understand the fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas is by appeal to MacIntyre's account of Aquinas' correspondence theory of truth which is based on the notion of the intellect's adequacy and its activity in the knowledge-process, as will be explained below.

III.3.1.3 The Notion of the Intellect's Adequacy and the Active Intellect in Aquinas's Theory of Truth

One way to explain MacIntyre's interpretation of Aquinas is by taking account of Aquinas's theory of truth. It is almost a commonplace that Aquinas' theory of truth, in the wake of Aristotle's, is a correspondence theory of truth according to which a theory or judgment is true if it describes reality as it is. Aristotle (*Metaphysics*, 4.7) maintains "to say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true". In the same way, Aquinas argues that truth consists in "*adaequatio mentis ad rem*" translated as "the conformity of thing and intellect" (*De Veritate*, Q.1, Art.2).

The idea of correspondence in Aquinas' theory of truth is conveyed by his notion of adequacy. As the definition above from Aquinas indicates, the adequacy of the intellect for the object means that its account of the object conforms to the reality of that object. According to this theory, the

121

adequation of the intellect with the object is the criterion of truth. The adequation can occur in both directions. For truth to be obtained, the object should conform to its concept in its creator's mind, in either God's or its human designer's mind. This account of truth is the basis of practical, ontological and divine senses of truth in all of which there is a design as the measure of truth.[19]

When there is no designer at stake, as in the ordinary sense of knowing things, the concept in the intellect should be adequate to the object. In other words, in the case of the practical intellect, the norms in the designer's mind are the measures of truth; but in the case of the speculative intellect, the thing itself is the measure of truth; as Aquinas puts it:

> Since the practical intellect causes things, it is a measure of what it causes. But, since the speculative intellect is receptive in regard to things, it is, in a certain sense, moved by things and consequently measured by them (Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, 1.4).

The term adequation in this realist theory means an agreement, and implies some sort of accordance, here in form not in substance, between the intellect and the object, which indicates their formal identity. Truth occurs when the object and the intellect share the same form. As in certain modern correspondence theories, truth here is also a relational property that holds formally between the intellect, and secondarily its concepts, that is, its intelligible species[20], and the object; whereas in the modern version truth is

---

[19] Albert Hofstadter (1965) has a useful discussion about ontological and practical truth, which applies well to Aquinas' account of practical truth. In his view (1965, p. 168), practical truth consists in the conformity of a thing, an action or a person to a norm or a model. Here the adequacy relation is reversed, and runs from the thing to the intellect that contains the norms. According to practical truth, to be out of true is to be out of a proper alignment. The Latin word *verus* does not mean only true, but also right and fitting, as it is the case with the word *rectus*. In Hofstadter's view (1965, p.168-169) the central word in the practical sphere is "right", and not "true". What is right conforms to a law or a norm. A true person is a trustworthy and reliable person who does not deviate from true norms. A true person is a steady and constant person in his loyalty. In Middle English, the terms true, faithful and trustworthy are cognate words coming from "trewe". It is also connected with the word "tree" that is strong, thick and upright (Hofstadter 1965, p. 176).

[20] For the view that Aquinas' notion of intelligible species, as mental representations with general content, function as sub-propositional units of thought, and that this notion can

based on the relation between propositions and facts; as C. D. Novaes (2011, p.1343) puts the point:

> Truth is thus [for Aquinas] again viewed as a relational property, as in modern correspondence theories of truth, but this time it involves concepts and objects instead of propositions and facts as its relata. Aquinas does discuss the truth of propositions as well (in *ST* Ia q. 16 a. 8 and 3), but their truth is derivative from truth in the intellect.

The adequacy relation between the thought and the object is a two-way relation. For Anselm, the adequacy relation was one-sided from object to divine concept. Aquinas attempted to reconcile the two-way direction of this relation in his theory of truth to generate a more adequate theory of truth. Truth, for Aquinas, primarily resides in the intellect when its forms conform to their objects, and secondarily and by analogy in objects as they are related to some true forms; "truth is predicated primarily of a true intellect and secondarily of a thing conformed with intellect" (Aquinas, *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate*, 1.2).

In MacIntyre's view, there have been different interpretations of the notion of correspondence, including the one that takes correspondence as describing a relation between propositions and facts. This interpretation, in MacIntyre's account (1988a, p.358), is a recent interpretation and cannot properly be read into the older interpretations of correspondence like Aquinas' account, "*adaequatio mentis ad rem*", which means the adequacy of the intellect for its objects (*De Veritate*, Q.1, Art.2). MacIntyre (1988a, p.358), accordingly, holds that if a present mindset is more adequate than its earlier versions to meet the challenges addressed to it—such that we do not expect its inadequacy in the future, even though it is in fact open to falsification—it counts as true, which means it is an adequate theory and that it corresponds to the reality it describes. Adequacy for MacIntyre here means the ability of a theory to survive against objections.

---

roughly be taken as the contemporary notion of a concept see J. E. Brower and S. Brower-Toland (2008, p.194).

MacIntyre sometimes conflates the notion of correspondence with the notion of adequacy, such that it sounds as if he is totally against the conventional notion of correspondence to reality. MacIntyre, in other cases, distinguishes between these two notions, but takes the notion of adequacy as a sign of the notion of correspondence and thus of truth. The passage below confirms this conflation:

> Those who have reached a certain stage in that development [of tradition] are then able to look back and to identify their own previous intellectual inadequacy or the intellectual inadequacy of their predecessors by comparing what they now judge the world, or at least part of it, to be with what it was then judged to be. *To claim truth for one's present mindset* and the judgments which are its expression is to claim that this kind of inadequacy, this kind of discrepancy, will never appear in any possible future situation, no matter how searching the enquiry, no matter how much evidence is provided, no matter what developments in rational enquiry may occur (1988a, p.358). [Italics added]

In this passage, being true has been taken as being adequate. The passage below indicates the second approach in which the adequacy of a theory is the sign of its correspondence to reality. MacIntyre here seems not to have been reducing the notion of correspondence to the notion of adequacy; rather, it seems that he has taken the notion of adequacy as the mark and the result of a true theory, which corresponds to reality.

The explanation is that, in non-trivial cases, unlike the trivial cases such as "snow is white", we cannot check directly the correspondence of a true theory to reality; for instance, in moral propositions, which according to the moral realism of the natural law tradition concern some truths about human nature, we cannot use the conventional sense of correspondence as is used in an empirical proposition (1988a, p.358).[21] In these cases, in

---

[21] Surely, the observance of moral principles has some observational consequences, as these principles are prerequisites of a normal human life. For instance, in a social setting in which telling lies, and doing injustice are tolerated its way of life and established social relationships can be observed to be different from another society or the same society were it not that these norms are valued. This view is in line with the vulnerability approach which I will adopt in the final chapter. Nevertheless, the observation in this case is different

MacIntyre's view, the adequacy of theories against existing challenges signifies their truth:

> To claim that some thesis is true is not only to claim for all possible times and places that it cannot be shown to fail to correspond to reality *in the sense of "correspond"* elucidated earlier but also that the mind which expresses its thought in that thesis is in fact adequate to its object (1988a, p.363) [Italics added].

How does the notion of adequacy relate to MacIntyre's fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas? The answer is that, as the quote above indicates, the condition for having an adequate account or theory is to evaluate it constantly against the most challenging evidence, which might uncover the theory's defects, and this is what MacIntyre means by advocating a dialectical and fallibilistic account of truth.

Another notion in Aquinas' theory of knowledge that is related to the notion of adequacy and to fallibilism is the idea that the intellect is active in the knowledge-process. The intellect makes intelligible species out of phantasms which, themselves, arise in the imagination, as a product of sensation (See Aquinas' *On the Uniqueness of Intellect against Averroists*, ch. IV).

Phantasm arises in the imagination from disparate perceived sense experiences, which represent the thing in its completeness, and is the thing's likeness. In the next stage, the universal features of the thing are abstracted from the phantasm by the intellect, and so the intelligible species are produced. Intelligible species is also the likeness of a thing, but unlike the phantasm it is totally de-individualized and de-materialized. For instance, the phantasm of a red car still pertains to one particular red car, but its intelligible species includes only the nature of a car, leaving aside all particular conditions that pertain to this particular car (P. S. Eardley and C.N. Still 2011, pp.51-56). Likewise, in MacIntyre's view, the mind is

---

from the kind of observation that is at stake in conventional empirical contexts, for instance, in that in the former the long-term consequences are also taken into account.

active and engages in assessing the adequacy of its current understanding to the prior understandings of its objects:

> This is a point at which it is important to remember that the presupposed conception of mind is not Cartesian. It is rather of *mind as activity*, of mind as engaging with the natural and social world in such activities as identification, reidentification, collecting, separating, classifying, and naming and all this by touching, grasping, pointing, breaking down, building up, calling to, answering to and so on (1988a, p.356). [Italics added][22]

The relation between these two notions, the activity and adequacy of the intellect, is that the intellect is adequate for an object when it can meet the expectations that are the bases of its activities or arise from its activities with regard to the subject; as MacIntyre puts it:

> The intellect is adequate to its objects in so far as the expectations which it frames on the basis of these activities [identification, reidentification, collecting, separating, classifying...] are not liable to disappointment (1988a, p.356).

An adequate theory, which is the outcome of an active intellect, should be able to explain the different aspects of its object, to predict its behaviour,

---

[22] J. Lamont has, in his personal communication to me, raised the point that "These are rather different kinds of activities from the one Aquinas has in mind when he talks about the agent [agent's] intellect; the latter acts simply by extracting universals from the phantasms of their particulars. The activity of the intellect as described by Aquinas and the activity of the intellect as described by MacIntyre in the passages you cite here are extremely different. That does not mean that the two accounts of intellectual activity need be contradictory rather than complementary; but the issue of whether they are or not has to be examined and discussed in detail – the two accounts cannot simply be subsumed under the general remark that both thinkers hold that the intellect is active".

However, I am not claiming here that these two senses of activity, that is, activity as making universals from phantasms, and activity as being involved in critical appraisal are totally identical in meaning; but, this is almost the path pursued by MacIntyre as the quote above indicates. In the passage above, reference is given to both "collecting, separating, classifying" and engagement with the social world and answering, which represent these two senses of the intellect's activity respectively, that is, what Aquinas has in mind when he describes the intellect's operation, and what MacIntyre concludes from it, which are a fallibilistic and discursive reasoning and an anti-epistemological view of enquiries. As this chapter is about MacIntyre's interpretation and application of Aquinas' theory of truth and knowledge, and is not an independent study of Aquinas, I cannot go into more detail concerning this issue here.

and to specify, if it is in a moral field, the particular setting that is necessary for normal functioning and flourishing of the subject. Thus, such a theory should always be open to revision. Although the progress of a theory from less to more adequate stages occurs in the context of a tradition based on its own contingent starting-points, the theory should be also exposed to counter-evidences from rival traditions. On this basis, for instance, a libertarian theory of justice that allows only the most minimal activities on the part of the state to correct social and economic inequalities would be, from Aristotle's and MacIntyre's perspective, an inadequate theory regarding the needs of human beings, because this theory does not take into account the way in which great inequities might impede the pursuit of the common good and even the exercise of philosophical reasoning, as was pointed to in chapter 2.

Moral theories should be rendered more adequate than their earlier versions or their rivals, in part, by meeting better the needs of human beings, some of which apply to them *qua* human beings. I will use such an approach in the final chapter to argue that we can base morality on basic characteristics of human beings which relate to animal and intellectual aspects required for their normal functioning.

In this section, I argued how MacIntyre's account of Aquinas' theory of truth based on the notions of adequacy and activity of the intellect relates to his CT and fallibilism. In sum, the point is that the intellect for Aquinas is active, and it attempts on the basis of its activities to proceed from less adequate stages to more adequate stages of thought. The intellect is inevitably located in a particular context wherein its activities occur. The intellect in order to have the most adequate account of things should hold itself open to revision and refutation, which might even originate from rival traditions. As Aquinas holds "All men by nature desire to know the truth; they also have a natural desire to avoid error and to refute it when the opportunity arises" (Aquinas, *On the Uniqueness of Intellect against Averroists*, chapter I.1). In the next section, I shall discuss another way in which we can make sense of MacIntyre's fallibilistic interpretation of

127

Aquinas' thought, which is through a weak interpretation of Aquinas' notion of the Intellect's veracity.

III.3.1.4 MacIntyre's Weak Interpretation of the Intellect's Veracity

An issue that is related to Aquinas' fallibilism is his optimistic view regarding the capacity of the intellect to know its proper objects, that is, the quiddity of material things, which as will be explained below is compatible with a fallibilistic understanding that MacIntyre espouses.

Aquinas has discussed in *Summa Theologica* the directedness of the intellect toward its proper objects. He there takes up a very optimistic view of the intellect's capacities, according to which the intellect, like any other cognitive faculty, does not or even cannot err in cognizing its proper object in its first operation, that is, in knowing the quiddity or the essential attributes of a thing:

> Hence, as long as the faculty exists, its judgment concerning its own proper object does not fail. Now the proper object of the intellect is the "quiddity" of a material thing; and hence, properly speaking, the intellect is not at fault concerning this quiddity (*ST,* I. Q.85, Art.6).

For Aquinas, J. I. Jenkins (1997, pp.112-113) argues, "each potency receives intrinsic ordination [direction] to its proper object"; errors only enter in the operation of potencies that are under the control of the will, and have the possibility to act in different ways. The intellect as a potency has the quiddity of things as its objects, and is not deceived in its grasp of the quiddities. This is the same as for sight when the organ is healthy, and there is not any impediment to seeing, and this is what the veracity of the intellect means. In Aquinas' view, the possible errors of the intellect come in its second operation, when it composes and divides concepts in a way that does not correspond to reality:

> By accident, however, falsity can occur in this knowing of quiddities, if the intellect falsely joins and separates. This happens in two ways: when it attributes the definition of one thing to another, as would happen were it to conceive

128

that "mortal rational animal" were the definition of an ass; or when it joins together parts of definitions that cannot be joined, as would happen were it to conceive that "irrational, immortal animal" were the definition of an ass (*Questiones Disputatae de Veritate, I-XII*).

For Aquinas error does not enter into the intellect's first operation of defining things as it is dealing with the quiddity of things as its proper object. The intellect, in other words, has the capacity to apprehend the essences of things by its natural light (Jenkins1997, pp.113-114). Jenkins (1997, p.115) states that although, as explained above, the intellect in its first operation grasps the essences fully, there is some textual evidence in which Aquinas speaks about our imperfect apprehensions of some natural essences like flies, fire and bees. Jenkins (1997, p.115) concludes that though, in Aquinas' view, the intellect is veracious in identifying natural kinds and distinguishing them according to their essences, or in other words it is able "to cut the world at its joints", it is not able at least initially to apprehend the whole essence of some things; the intellect in these cases uses reasoning to move from an imperfect to a full grasp of the essences. In this interpretation, we should use fallible discursive reason to obtain a full grasp of some essences, and since our grasp of the essentials is deficient we should instead use accidents in our definitions of the things (Jenkins 1991, p.632); however, in Jenkins' view (1997, p.117), Aquinas may still hold that the intellect due to its abilities and natural light can claim the correspondence of its ideas to the essences. Our intellect in its initial understanding "cuts the world at its joints", though it has many things to learn through discursive reasoning. In Jenkins' view (1997, p.126), this assurance about the correspondence of the intellect's ideas to reality, despite the incomplete understanding of essences, indicates that Aquinas is epistemologically optimistic.[23] However, the important point is that, in Aquinas's view, the kind of justification acquired based on the cognition of

---

[23] I think this is one reason why Aquinas infers the correspondence of a so far adequate theory with reality, which is always possible to turn out be untrue. There is a simplistic and optimistic realist element working here.

natures is an ideal and paradigmatic justification which is quite difficult to attain. This is an important point for a limited fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas (S. MacDonald 1993, pp.179-180). There are, for Aquinas, two other kinds of justification besides this ideal case; one is demonstrative justification, that is *scientia*, i.e. scientific knowledge, and the other is non-demonstrative that is the product of probabilistic/dialectical reasoning. The latter is based on uncertain and non-necessary propositions held by most people, which produce a positive epistemic status in the agent regarding the truth of such propositions. The former, *scientia* in a non-strict sense, is a kind and a degree of epistemic justification that only approximates the necessity and infallibility of purely formal and a priori disciplines, and is not based on immediate self-evident propositions (MacDonald 1993, p.177).

Encountering sensible objects might give the agent a vague apprehension of the natures of the objects. The repetition of this encountering might refine their apprehension; however, it is possible that the agent fails to grasp the nature of the objects. The apprehension of natures is a lengthy process, and it is possible that it not be accomplished at all. The abstracting activity of the agent for producing universals out of particulars is a gradual process. The agent might not fulfill the apprehension of natures and universals, and so fails to recognize the evidence of those propositions (MacDonald 1993, pp.179 &184).

This interpretation, as Jenkins (1991, p.623) points out, is in fact a weak interpretation of Aquinas' notion of the veracity of the intellect according to which the intellect's veracity is consistent with it having imperfect conceptualizations of natural kinds, which should be improved through time using fallible reasoning. As Jenkins (1991, p.623) holds, MacIntyre, along some other prominent 20th century Thomists such as Etienne Gilson and Bernard Lonergan, has adopted this interpretation which lends support to a fallibilistic understanding of Aquinas' thought. In my view, this interpretation is clear in MacIntyre's thought when he argues for a gradual understanding of first principles and fixed ends of objects of

knowledge, as will be explained further in this chapter regarding his anti-epistemological account of first principles (2006f, p.148).

The argument so far in this section indicates that despite Aquinas' optimistic account of the human intellect, there remains room for mistakes on the part of the intellect, particularly when it composes propositions that contain the quiddity of things. This exposition of Aquinas' thought supports MacIntyre's case for offering a fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas' account of knowledge, because although Aquinas is optimistic regarding the possibility of knowing essences, he thinks it necessary to have a discursive method to acquire such an understanding.

III.3.1.5 The Fallibilistic Interpretation based on an anti-Epistemological Interpretation of Aquinas

A fifth way to explain MacIntyre's fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas—besides his argumentative style, moral aspect, his notion of the intellect's adequacy and activity, and his interpretation of the intellect's veracity—is by explaining MacIntyre's anti-epistemological construal of Aquinas' theory of knowledge. I explained in the foregoing chapter MacIntyre's view of the first principles of practical reasoning. The main point was that MacIntyre, following Aquinas, distinguishes first principles into two categories. The first are those principles that are known by all rational human beings such as the truth of the proposition "a whole is bigger than its parts", or the formal rules of logic such as the non-contradiction law. This group of first principles is epistemological, because their evidence is known by the analysis of subject/predicate, and so can be made evident to all rational human beings.

The second kind of first principles are substantial first principles which are or become evident to those minds that are formed and trained in particular traditions. This group of first principles is not epistemological; that is to say, they are not like Descartes' distinct and indubitable ideas (2006f, p.148).

Aquinas' argument for this distinction is slightly different from the way I articulated it above on the basis of MacIntyre's account. For Aquinas, any first principle is self-evident in two senses; it is self-evident in itself if the predicate is included in the subject, whether we know this or not. The same first principle might or might not be self-evident in "relation to us" depending on whether we know sufficiently the subject/predicate to admit the fact that the predicate is present in the subject; as Aquinas explains this:

> For instance, this proposition, "Man is a rational being," is, in its very nature, self-evident, since who says "man," says "a rational being": and yet to one who knows not what a man is, this proposition is not self-evident (*ST*, I-II, Q.94, Art.2).

In Aquinas' view, the terms of some propositions like the examples below are known to all, but the terms and so the self-evidence of some propositions are only known to "the wise":

> ... such are those propositions whose terms are known to all, as, "Every whole is greater than its part," and, "Things equal to one and the same are equal to one another." But some propositions are self-evident only to the wise, who understand the meaning of the terms of such propositions: thus to one who understands that an angel is not a body, it is self-evident that an angel is not circumscriptively in a place: but this is not evident to the unlearned, for they cannot grasp it (*ST*, I.II, Q.94, Art.2).

The first principles that are only known to the wise are substantial first principles which we come to know through our enquiries. The wise in this process should argue dialectically from contingent beliefs that are valid in their tradition based on its standards, and then continue to evaluate them, particularly when they face intellectual challenges, which MacIntyre calls epistemological crises[24], to arrive finally at an adequate account of things.

MacIntyre (2006f, pp.147-148), as discussed in the previous chapter, is against the epistemological interpretation of all first principles and calls them "mythological beasts". He disapproves of the attempts of some Neo-

---

[24]This notion will be explained at length in the next chapter.

Thomists from Joseph Kleutgen onwards to interpret Aquinas as being engaged in an "epistemological enterprise". To the contrary, MacIntyre (2006f, pp.147-148) holds that if the Thomist is faithful to the intentions of Aristotle and Aquinas, he will not be engaged in an epistemological enterprise except incidentally.

In MacIntyre's view (2006f, p.148), an epistemological enterprise is one conducted from a first-person perspective; that is to say, it involves the activities of an "I" who attempts to assess the conformity of judgments to an external reality, so as to provide "justified certitude regarding their truth and error". This approach, MacIntyre holds, faces a sceptical challenge regarding the relation between subjective judgments and reality.

As contrasted with this, in the anti-epistemological interpretation of knowledge which MacIntyre upholds, the intellect by knowing becomes formally identical with the object, and so its capacity for knowing becomes actualized. The intellect by becoming formally identical with the object does not stand in an external relation to the object; in other words, the object will not be external to it, and so the sceptical challenge regarding the relation of inner judgments to an external reality dissolves; as MacIntyre puts it:

> The mind, actualized in knowledge, responds to the object as the object is[25] and as it would be, independently of the mind's knowledge of it. The intellect knows itself only in the second-order knowledge of its own operations and is known also by others in those operations. But even such knowledge when achieved need not entail certitude of a Cartesian sort (2006f, p.149).

I take MacIntyre here as saying that the intellect is intertwined in the world; it does not have knowledge of itself and its procedures before starting its operations, thus the un-actualized mind at this stage does not face epistemological questions about the justification of its judgment and of

---

[25]Here again the simplistic realist element comes to the fore, which points to the possibility of knowing reality as it is, and that an adequate theory corresponds with reality. I think at this stage the linguistic challenges, which put this relation into question, have not yet been leveled against Aquinas.

the first principles of its knowledge. When the intellect receives the form of the object in the knowledge-process, its capacity for knowing becomes actualized, and the intellect becomes formally identical to that object. The intellect at this stage might or might not acquire knowledge of its operations; that is to say, the intellect as a matter of fact has the knowledge of the object by being formally identical with it, though it might not be self-conscious of this knowledge, the first principles that underlie its judgments, and the procedures that it follows for attaining certainty. To put this more simply, it is not the case that the intellect as an empty entity consciously follows a procedure to move from self-evident first principles to subordinate truths; rather, the intellect is embedded in some given circumstances and develops its contingent knowledge of things, and then finally might become conscious of its underlying first principles, which of course are not necessarily justifiable to all rational agents. Accordingly, Aquinas' theory of knowledge is construed primarily in metaphysical terms, as it involves notions such as the actualization of the intellect in the knowledge-process.

M. D. Jordan (1986, pp.118-119), along lines similar to MacIntyre's metaphysical interpretation of Aquinas' theory of knowledge, argues that Aquinas attends to epistemological questions only in the framework of ontology. In his view, Aquinas is not concerned with finding some reasons to make a subject assured of the truth of his thinking, and to assuage epistemological doubts. In Jordan's view, a theory of knowledge or a cognitional theory does not appear in Aquinas' works in an organized way. Aquinas' epistemic views are thus located in the realm of ontology where he discusses the operations of the soul as an embedded intellect. Aquinas, thus, is not attempting to find reasons to assure the conscious subject of the veracity of his thought; instead, he is trying to disclose the operations of an embodied intellect.

Jordan (1986, pp.118-119) maintains the term and the substance of epistemology is a modern coinage which does not appear in Aquinas' works. The absence of epistemology in Aquinas' psychology amounts to the differences that exist between his psychological remarks and the meanings

of modern epistemological vocabulary. For instance, in Jordan's view, the term certainty has a broad sense for Aquinas, and its typical contexts are moral rather than epistemological. For instance, Aquinas uses the term certainty in the phrase "certainty of hope and faith" which is strikingly at odds with the modern epistemological sense of the term certainty which stands in opposition to faith and uncritical thinking.

This metaphysical account of Aquinas' theory of knowledge is relevant to MacIntyre's CT, as it has less universalistic aspects than does an epistemological account. The paradigmatic case of an epistemological account of knowledge for MacIntyre is Descartes' theory of knowledge in which he sought to find some indubitable foundation for his beliefs by means of methodological doubt. These foundations should be valid for all rational human beings, and should not need further justification (2006f, p.148).

By contrast to this, in the metaphysical account, the evidence of first principles is known only to those minds that have been engaged with the object and have become adequate to it. This evidence cannot be demonstrated for all rational human beings, as these principles are substantial in the sense that they are informative about the world, and are not analytic propositions; accordingly, their knowledge requires the intellect having engagement with the object and having "theoretical achievement" (2006f, p.148).

The intellect begins with the beliefs it happens to have, and moves from less adequate theories to more adequate theories by holding them open to revision. This metaphysical account has a particularistic aspect, because the intellect starts with the beliefs around it in its tradition, and moves dialectically toward more adequate accounts. This account refers to the methodological sense of the CT as was explained in the previous chapter. Although I used this metaphysical explanation to clarify MacIntyre's CT and its associated fallibilism, it raises some questions regarding its consistency with inter-traditional fallibilism and discursive reasoning, which will be explained below.

135

III.3.1.5.1 A Partial Criticism of MacIntyre Concerning the Consistency of His anti-Epistemological Approach with His inter-Traditional Fallibilism

As was argued above, in MacIntyre's view, theoretical achievement is a condition for knowing evident first principles. This theoretical achievement is obtained primarily in a tradition. This sense of belongingness to a tradition regarding first principles is clearer in MacIntyre's idea that first principles are evident for a mind that is "formed" in a tradition (2006f, p.148) than in his idea of theoretical achievement as a condition for knowing first principles. If knowledge of first principles can also be acquired by the enquirers who are outside a tradition, it would point to the dilution of the role of tradition, and sets some limits for the metaphysical and anti-epistemological explanation of first principles provided by MacIntyre.

The explanation is that, if we stick to a thick metaphysical explanation, it would be difficult to make sense of the discursive and fallibilistic interpretation of Aquinas' theory of knowledge offered by MacIntyre, because one element of this metaphysical view is that we do not have knowledge of the knowledge that we have at the beginning of our enquiries, or because we start from contingently valid points in a tradition; whereas discursive reasoning requires access to the underlying reasons we have for our theories and convictions, and being able to reflect on the starting-points of our enquiries to compare them with other traditions'.

One possible answer to this objection lies in the way I described above MacIntyre's theory of truth as being "partly epistemic". The explanation is that, in my understanding, the discursive and fallibilistic features of Aquinas' thought would come to the fore after this metaphysical phase. When the agent becomes self-conscious of his knowledge and of his underlying first principles, he can evaluate them against rival reasons to

136

assess his position's adequacy. The knowledge-process starts with contingent starting-points, and the question of their necessity does not arise at this stage, and when the agent reaches the epistemological stage he can engage in discursive reasoning about them. Accordingly, we can expect that when the CT applies to the epistemological stage, it does not mean that different traditions cannot communicate with each other. Nevertheless, a serious question again arises here, that is, limiting the discursive and fallibilistic reasoning to the epistemological phase might render this interaction sterile, because this discursive reasoning might reach first principles and starting-points of enquiries which are based on a tradition's contingent metaphysical convictions; as a result, the inter-traditional disputes about them may prove indecisive. MacIntyre's emphasis on starting enquiries from contingent starting-points in a tradition, and that rationality in a tradition reflects the progress in that tradition faces the question regarding how we can compare traditions' starting-points with each other. This comparison might prove necessary during inter-traditional intellectual encounters. This is important particularly if we take into account that MacIntyre takes first principles as revisable and refutable (2006f, p.160).

MacIntyre might argue that first principles would be evaluated on the basis of the evaluation of the systems in which they are operating (2006f, p.160). In other words, we do not directly assess first principles; rather, we evaluate them on the basis of the relative adequacy of the theories that involve these principles. I, however, find this response unconvincing for the following reasons.

My first reason is that we cannot expect the traditions that have different contingent starting-points to agree on the measures of the adequacy of their systems. They might simply disagree about the meaning and the measures of adequacy and superiority used to evaluate their theories against each other. These disagreements might be insolvable due to their different metaphysical backgrounds, particularly taking into account that epistemology is supposed not to enter into this metaphysical stage.

137

My second reason is that the superiority of a whole system of thought does not necessarily mean that its first principles are more adequate or justified than other systems'. It needs further reasoning to show that the superiority, if it is agreed on, is logically related to some particular first principles.

My own answer to this question is that, in order to make the process of discursive reasoning fruitful, we should acknowledge the existence of some shared substantial measures of rationality across traditions in the light of which different theories from different traditions can be evaluated. I will return to this issue in my discussion of relativism in the next chapter. Accordingly, I think, although the acculturation of an agent in a tradition might give him a kind of certitude regarding the convictions he has grown up with, this kind of certitude does not prove helpful in inter-traditional discursive reasoning, unless this certitude is translatable into a language of reasoning based on some substantial universal measures of rationality. In other words, we cannot, on the one hand, emphasize the tradition-bound nature of rationality, and on the other hand, argue for the necessity of an inter-traditional discursive and argumentative method, unless we admit the existence of some shared measures of rationality, and that agents are not totally captured by their traditions.

MacIntyre explains Aquinas' contention that the first principles with substantive content are only evident to the wise (*ST*, I.II, Q.94, Art.2), by holding that this evidence is only known to "those with an intellectual grasp of the theoretical framework in which they are embedded" (2006f, p.148). This description, namely, having the intellectual grasp of the theoretical framework, suggests that MacIntyre does not have in mind an ontological relation between the mind and the tradition in which it is embedded. This is in line with the point I made in the preceding chapters that an ontological interpretation of MacIntyre might lead to a misleading interpretation of him by suggesting that traditions are closed frameworks. The wise, and those with an intellectual grasp of the theoretical framework might come from outside a tradition—and this is in line with MacIntyre's view regarding the

possibility of knowing a tradition's claim in its own terms from outside it, which will be explained in the next chapter. This explanation supports MacIntyre's discursive and fallibilistic method; however, a problem surfaces, namely, it is not clear how this explanation fits with MacIntyre's metaphysical and anti-epistemological account explained above regarding the intellect's operations. The metaphysical account of the knowledge-process fits better with the misleading ontological interpretation referred to above than with the discursive method which entails having access to reasons, which is a feature of an epistemological account.

Furthermore, MacIntyre's point that the metaphysical explanation of the intellect's operation discards sceptical doubt regarding the relation between mental objects and the world lacks any application with regard to moral issues. It is not a main question in the moral field whether the mind represents the world; rather, a main question here is how to secure an agreement on moral norms, and how to arrange our relationships properly in a situation in which people do not share a comprehensive account of the good. To say that the intellect does not err in grasping the nature of things, as Aquinas thinks, does not tell us anything regarding how we can manage our moral disputes, particularly if some of these theories appeal to the human good that is based on human nature.

III.4 Conclusion

This chapter serves as an introduction to MacIntyre's theory of truth which forms the subject of the next chapter. I argued that MacIntyre takes Aquinas' theory of truth as a realist theory of truth that involves an account of correspondence that is different from modern correspondence theories. The difference is that for Aquinas truth primarily holds in a relation between the intellect and objects, and not between propositions and facts, and involves his metaphysical theory of forms. For Aquinas the intellect, which of course later forms concepts and propositions, should become adequate to and formally identical with the object in order to grasp the truth. This gives a metaphysical sense to Aquinas's theory of truth, because the intellect and the object become actualized in the knowledge-process.

139

This metaphysical explanation, unlike the epistemological interpretation of Aquinas' theory of truth, has particularistic aspects which suit MacIntyre's CT, particularly in its methodological sense sketched in the previous chapter. The intellect, on this basis, is an embodied entity in the context of the body and the tradition in which it is located. The intellect cannot leave aside all these particularities in order to formulate universal and convincing-for-all principles. The intellect should begin with its currently held positions, arriving at more compelling and more adequate beliefs by a constant process of revision and refutation.

I attempted to articulate MacIntyre's reasons for offering an interpretation of Aquinas's thought that is compatible with and, in fact, supports fallibilism and CT. I offered five reasons for this based on 1) Aquinas' argumentative methodology; 2) the virtue and moral aspect of his theory of truth, which requires openness to all criticisms; 3) The notion of the intellect's adequacy and activity in the knowledge-process emphasizes a gradualist progress toward adequate theories; 4) MacIntyre's weak interpretation of Aquinas' notion of the veracity of the intellect, according to which there is room for the intellect's errors, and fallible reasoning is necessary for grasping the accidents and essentials of things; 5) MacIntyre's anti-epistemological interpretation of Aquinas's thought, which dismisses the epistemological ambition of providing certitude at the beginning of enquiries, and instead, holds that first principles of practical rationality are the destinations of our intellectual enquiries achievable through dialectical methods.

I, however, argued that this metaphysical interpretation might pose hindrances in the way of discursive reasoning which MacIntyre endorses. The reason is that in so far as we lack conscious reasons for our beliefs we cannot participate in a fully productive dialogue with our opponents, particularly when it concerns the contingent starting points of traditions.

I also argued that Aquinas' optimistic epistemology regarding our ability to know the nature of things, though it leaves some room for errors,

140

does not do justice to the modern condition of value-pluralism. As evidence for this claim, I will mention Aquinas' account of blasphemy in chapter 5.

In the following chapter, I will explain MacIntyre's theory of truth the Thomistic bases of which were discussed in this chapter. I will again, on different occasions, return to Aquinas' metaphysics and theory of knowledge to explain and evaluate MacIntyre's theory of truth.

IV- Chapter 4: MacIntyre's Theory of Truth

IV.1 Introduction

I argued in the previous chapter that MacIntyre ascribes a correspondence theory of truth to Aquinas, which he thinks is different from a modern version of such a theory. The difference, in sum, lies in the point that for Aquinas the correspondence relation does not primarily hold between propositions and facts; rather, it holds between the intellect and its concepts, on the one hand, and objects on the other hand. The inclusion of the intellect in this relation makes correspondence and the truth-relation apt for non-observational and non-factual relations, as is required in moral issues. In moral cases, we cannot speak of a correspondence relation as we do in describing objects and states of affairs; instead, the truth holds when the intellect is adequate to its objects; that is to say, when the theory withstands the most challenging objections.[26]

MacIntyre (1988, p.358) maintains that his theory of truth is a correspondence theory of truth as described above. I explained in the foregoing chapter how MacIntyre, invoking Aquinas' notion of the adequacy of the intellect, gives a fallibilistic sense to his theory of truth in line with his constitution thesis. In the present chapter, I aim to explain further MacIntyre's theory of truth by comparing it with relativism and perspectivism which both make claims akin to MacIntyre's CT. The importance of this discussion lies in the fact that the CT intrinsically has some relativistic and perspectivistic implications. According to the CT, there are no measures of rationality independent of traditions. Any rationality, in this view, belongs to a tradition. As this explanation implies, among the first things that come to the mind regarding the CT is whether it means all rationalities are the same, that is relativism's claim, or if it is not

---

[26]All told, I do not think appealing to a fallibilistic and dialectical reasoning necessarily needs such a metaphysical account of the intellect and of the correspondence theory of truth which MacIntyre has favored. In the previous and current chapter, I am in fact trying to offer an intelligible picture of MacIntyre's espousal of this version of the theory of truth, which is open to the question whether indeed we need such a complicated metaphysical theory to conclude the kind of fallibilism that MacIntyre seeks to justify. Instead, I think it is commonsensical that we need to have gradualist and fallible reasoning in our enquiries.

142

possible to know reality as it is independent of perspectives, that is perspectivism's claim. Therefore, by exploring the borders between the CT and relativism/perspectivism we can come to a better understanding of the CT. Due to the importance of the charge of relativism levelled against MacIntyre, a significant part of this chapter will be devoted to this issue.

IV.2 MacIntyre's Realist Theory of Truth

MacIntyre's theory of knowledge, in general, and his theory of truth, in particular, are metaphysically realist. This includes two claims as follows. 1) Ontological realism according to which there is an existent world independent of any mind. For MacIntyre, this existent world is orderly and hierarchical. 2) Epistemological realism according to which human beings' minds are capable of knowing this order, as it is in reality (2006h, p.204). Both realistic elements appear in MacIntyre's theory of knowledge. Truth, in this view, lies in the mind being receptive of that order, and in the correspondence of its judgments about the world to the world (2006h, p.206). An important element of MacIntyre's realism is that his theory of truth, despite its universal scope, is mainly concerned with ethics. In other words, MacIntyre's focus here is on moral realism. Moral realism for MacIntyre does not mean that virtues and vices refer to factual entities; rather, it means moral truth is a relational notion that holds between objective relata. For MacIntyre (1981, p.52) these two relata are human nature and the human good which is human-nature-as-it should be, between which moral virtues mediate. As the two notions refer to objective properties which are independent of subjective judgments about human beings' nature and about the good, this theory falls under the category of realism.

MacIntyre's objection to the Enlightenment account of morality can be understood in line with this realism, when he explains its failure to rationally justify morality in terms of denying any essence to human beings, which defines their true ends (1981, p.54). That human beings have an essence as the basis of their morality certainly conflicts with a strong interpretation of the CT that denies the possibility of having a shared

143

morality for human beings *qua* human beings, as will be explained further in this chapter. To explain MacIntyre's realism further, I shall sketch below a misunderstanding that presents MacIntyre as being influenced by the linguistic turn in philosophy. R. Smith (2003, p.214) explains MacIntyre's epistemic and moral theory as follows:

> But with the shift into the linguistic turn … the locus of construction shifts to the social, linguistically formed community. So MacIntyre's and Hauerwas's presupposition that we cannot get outside of language is a more recent development in this same trajectory of thought that presupposes we cannot get to a real world, and that the mind's contact with the world is one of making, not matching.

There are of course some hints of such a linguistic interpretation in MacIntyre's texts, for instance, when he denies the notion of value-free facts as the objects of knowledge:

> What is and was not harmless, but highly misleading, was to conceive of a realm of facts independent of judgment or of any other form of linguistic expression, so that judgments or statements or sentences could be paired off with facts, truth or falsity being the alleged relationship between such paired items (1988a, pp.357-358).

However, Smith's interpretation is not supported by MacIntyre's advocacy of Aquinas' theory of truth and his insistence that there is a hierarchical world independent of our minds and of our language as the object of knowledge (2006h, p.204). MacIntyre explains Aquinas' theory of truth approvingly as follows:

> It is a central feature of all crafts, of furniture making and fishing and farming, as much as of philosophy, that they require the minds of those who engage in the craft to come to terms with and to make themselves adequate to the existence and properties of some set of objects conceived to exist independently of those minds. The embodied mind, in and through its activity, has to become receptive to forms (*eidé*) of what is other than itself and in being constituted by those formal objects becomes, in the appropriate way, them (1990a, p.68).

144

It is then a metaphysical presupposition of this view of truth that there is an order of things and that this order exists independently of the human mind, just as do the objects and sets of objects that find their place within it. And to make true judgments about the order of things is for the mind to be receptive to that order, so that its judgments about that order agree with how things are just because it is how things are in respect of that order that determines how the mind thinks about it and this not accidentally (2006h, p.204).

The quotes above run counter to the linguistic interpretation of MacIntyre offered by Smith, as they point to the necessity of grasping the order of the world which is independent of our minds and languages. Despite the existence of some textual evidence suggesting that for MacIntyre facts are intertwined with theories, there are plenty of passages that present him as epistemologically realist, in the sense that human beings have the capacity to know things as they are, and that this happens when the mind is adequate to them:

What is it to attain truth? The perfected understanding in which enquiry terminates, when some mind is finally adequate to that subject matter about which it has been enquiring, consists in key part in being able to say how things are, rather than how they seem to be from the particular, partial, and limited standpoint of some particular set of perceivers or observers or enquirers (2006c, p.58).

In line with this realism, MacIntyre's theory of truth, following Aquinas', has a moral aspect. Truth is a kind of good; it is the intellect's good to arrive at truth. This feature is related to the ontological realism discussed above. A judgment when it is true helps the agent to be in a right relationship with the aspect of reality that he is thinking about. Accordingly, a true judgment should be believed and a false judgment should not be believed. False judgments and beliefs, when they are believed or acted upon, mediate between agents and reality, and distort their relationship. False judgments are not worthy of "judgmental assent"; otherwise, they will disable agents in their everyday activities and enquiries, since these judgments do not present reality as it is (2006h, p.201). The role of the mind

145

is to find the place of the thing in the order of things; the mind by playing this part fulfills its role and its good. The intellect, as a result of having this role, should always remain open to the falsification of its beliefs in order to arrive at the best possible account of things. Another feature of MacIntyre's theory of truth, relevant to its realist aspect explained above, is its non-relativistic and non-perspectivistic character, as will be discussed below. In fact, MacIntyre's epistemological realism requires him to be able to rebut these two charges.

IV.3 MacIntyre's Realist Theory of Truth as Distinct from Relativism and Perspectivism

MacIntyre (1988a, p.9) has emphasized constantly that there are different versions of rationality and justice in different traditions. Despite this, he believes his theory of truth is distinct from relativism and perspectivism, and that it is possible to speak about truth beyond particular traditions (2006c, p.58). In what follows, I shall discuss MacIntyre's case for this claim. It is no exaggeration to say that most critiques of MacIntyre's CT have been levelled against this claim, that is, whether he can make his aperspectival and non-relativistic notion of truth consistent with the constitution thesis employed in his theory of truth.

IV.3.1 The Distinction from Relativism

Any comparison makes sense in a context where there is or appear to be some similarities between things. The comparison between MacIntyre's CT and relativism indicates that there are some similarities between the two notions. By relativism here I mean both cognitive and moral relativism. Cognitive relativism is the view that there are different incommensurable standards for theoretical and practical understanding. As N. Rescher (2003, p.151) defines the term, cognitive relativism is the view that "any group's standard of knowledge is on a par with any other's, seeing that there is no 'higher,' asituational standard from which those groups' standards themselves can be assessed." By the same token, moral relativism is the view that the moral standards and values of different groups and cultures are

146

on a par, and are not properly subject to objective rational appraisal based on other groups' standards.

How does the CT approach relativism in its two senses? The CT borders on cognitive relativism when MacIntyre (1988a, p.9) emphasizes that there are rationalities and justices in different traditions instead of just Rationality and Justice. The existence of different notions or norms of justice implies moral relativism if their merits cannot be compared objectively. Moral relativism is also suggested by that aspect of the CT which underlines the relation between social and cultural settings and the virtues in those settings, as will be explained below.

IV.3.1.1 MacIntyre's View as Distinct from Moral Relativism

In this section, I will explain the proximity of MacIntyre's CT to moral relativism, and show how he thinks he can avoid this charge. I, then, will argue how he can make his case against moral relativism stronger, that is, by qualifying his claim that different social settings require different accounts of the virtues, and by giving more attention to the notion of *telos* or the shared facts of human nature than to the context-relative notion of functions. To recall, I argued in chapter 2 that one aspect of the CT is that it provides a context for the definition and exercise of the virtues. MacIntyre's explanation of this in some respects comes close to moral relativism. MacIntyre's point is that cultural and social settings according to their needs and requirements necessitate or pave the way for some virtues to appear and become paramount; as he puts the point:

> The standard list of the virtues will include some items which derive their status from the part they play in all human life. It will also include other items which derive their status from some more particular set of beliefs or forms of understanding, which is restricted to some (perhaps to only one) form of culture and social order (1975, p.14).

On this basis, for instance, MacIntyre claims that children in a Lutheran culture were taught to tell the truth whatever consequences; but "traditional Bantu parents" brought up their children not to tell the truth to

strangers as this could make the family vulnerable to witchcraft; or as MacIntyre holds we in modern culture are taught not to tell the truth "to elderly great-aunts who invite us to admire their new hats" (1975, p.14). In another example, MacIntyre maintains, thrift is a crucial feature of individuals in a social and cultural order based on protestant work-ethics, or chastity becomes an important quality and virtue in a social order in which it is believed that "certain forms of marriage and virginity are the will of God" (1975, p.14).

These remarks about the relation between social orders and their lists of virtues are close to moral relativism which states there are incommensurable values in different cultures, without there being a vantage point to evaluate these values between these different cultures.

MacIntyre is aware of the proximity of his CT to moral relativism which he rejects as "facile relativism" (1975, p.13). The explanation from MacIntyre's perspective is that although there are different lists of the virtues, different justifying criteria and rank-orderings for the virtues in different cultural and social settings, there are also similarities between these settings in light of which we understand their differences; there are also some shared elements between different lists, which is against the claim of relativism:

> We are able to identify in each of these societies one and the same focus upon a set of human qualities, the presence or absence of which in a man determines how he is to be assessed as a man. Were this not so, we would not be able to understand these various cultures as differing from each other over one and the same thing. Our perception of difference presupposes a perception of resemblance (1975, p.13).

It is striking that MacIntyre here appeals to the notion of humanity in the phrase "human quality" in a way that provides a cross-cultural measure for morality. He maintains that a society that does not recognize the value of honesty, justice and courage lacks the general features of human society and degenerates into a Hobbesian state of nature (1975, p.14).

If MacIntyre invokes the notions of humanity and human qualities in his moral theory, it indicates that at least in his judgment his theory is not vulnerable to the criticism of relativism, because these notions provide some minimal requirements for different traditions to meet. These notions as used by MacIntyre here are context-independent. Nevertheless, MacIntyre's arguments here move in a direction that, in my view, conflicts with this minimally universalistic approach sketched above. This conflict surfaces in the passage below:

> Societies differ in their accounts of the virtues. There are not only differences as to which human qualities are to be accounted virtues; but there are, of course, *also differences as to the criteria* by means of which the virtues are to be justified. Fifth-century Athens is in many ways at odds with twelfth-century Iceland; … [however] we are able to identify in each of these societies one and the same focus upon a set of human qualities, the presence or absence of which in a man determines how he is to be assessed as a man (1975, p.13). [Italics added]

The conflict is that MacIntyre, on the one hand, claims there are different qualities as human qualities and different measures for justifying these qualities in different cultures and periods, and on the other hand, claims we can find a similar focus in different cultures on certain human qualities.

One way MacIntyre has taken to resolve this tension is by arguing that the essentiality of the virtues of justice, truthfulness, and courage for any human society is compatible with the existence of varied codes for these virtues in different cultures. He defines justice independently of its different codes as follows.

> Justice requires that we treat others in respect of merit or desert according to uniform and impersonal standards. To depart from the standards of justice in some particular instance defines our relationship with the relevant person as in some way special or distinctive (1975, p.13).

However, he goes on to hold that the recognition of these essential features for any human society is compatible with the existence of different accounts of these virtues:

> This recognition that we cannot escape the definition of our relationships in terms of such goods [justice, courage, truthfulness, etc.,] is perfectly compatible with the acknowledgement that different societies have different codes of truthfulness, justice, and courage (1975, p.14).

In my view, MacIntyre's view regarding this compatibility does not hold, because it is possible that some of these varying codes of the virtues run counter to the general requirements of the virtues that these codes should represent, that is, an impartial treatment of people, as the earlier quote from MacIntyre indicates. To explain further, MacIntyre offers a definition of justice that, in his view, holds true for different cultures as far as they want to qualify as a human culture along the lines that justice requires impartial treatment of people (1975, p.13). This general definition sets some limits upon the possible forms that codes of justice might take in different cultures. This is also true for the other virtues such as courage and truthfulness. This general requirement, if MacIntyre observes it and qualifies accordingly his claim that there are different codes for the virtues, would save him from moral relativism.

MacIntyre's definition of justice explained above provides some measures for the evaluation of particular codes of justice. Particular codes of justice are *status quos* and existing measures of justice in a social and cultural order. They might not be true standards of justice whose criterion is the definition quoted above. For instance, the fact that a given society for some reasons teaches its citizens not to tell the truth to strangers is not *per se* a valid claim to truthfulness and justice. The society by the same reason might allow its citizens to eat strangers when they are hungry. These differing codes of the virtues cannot be taken for granted and treated as non-criticizable.

If MacIntyre allows the evaluation of different existing codes of the virtues based on some universal criteria, like the one he offered for the

150

definition of justice, or based on the vulnerability approach which will be explained in chapter 6, his CT would be immune to the criticism of moral relativism. The view that there are some universal requirements for the virtues is compatible with there being qualifications to these universal requirements in different cultures but not with the view that there are incommensurable accounts of the virtues in different traditions. These universal virtues take different forms when they are realized in different contexts due to the requirements of these contexts. MacIntyre has defended such a view as follows.

MacIntyre approves Aquinas' distinction between the primary precepts of the natural law, which are universal, and the secondary precepts which concern the application of those primary precepts, and are context-sensitive (2006j, p.65). MacIntyre, in line with this, criticizes Kant, arguing that his moral theory cannot legitimately allow qualifications and exceptions to moral rules such as the rule of truth-telling. By contrast, MacIntyre holds his own moral theory, which is based on human beings' good, can fulfill this task, because in his theory the good of truth-telling as well as the good of breaking this rule on necessary occasions both are derived from the same good (2006m, p.132).

MacIntyre's point is that moral exceptions are valid, in so far as they serve the same good that a moral rule in its unqualified manner serves. If this interpretation of MacIntyre is correct, he should tailor his CT such that it does not imply that any human quality that plays a part in a social setting should count as a virtue, because this role might not be in line with the good that is the basis of MacIntyre's moral theory; otherwise, his teleological morality will turn into a functionalist one. The distinction between teleological and functional accounts was explained in chapter 2 in the discussion of MacIntyre's stance toward moral arbitrariness. I argued there that MacIntyre thinks some virtues might indeed be dysfunctional to their social setting, which shows MacIntyre from his Aristotelian perspective appeals to some normative measures independent of a particular setting.

151

The notion of *telos* is wider than the notion of function. A function is defined in a limited system; but a *telos* or a final end with regard to a human being encompasses different systems in which he is living. If we accept, as does sometimes MacIntyre on the basis of his Aristotelianism and the natural law tradition, that there is an essence to human nature (1981, pp.52-55),[27] it will provide a vantage point for the evaluation of existing moral codes. For instance, if a social setting requires its people to be mean, which is different from frugality, we are not justified to take this quality as a virtue, despite the role it plays in preserving that social setting, because our human nature is such that we are vulnerable to natural and economic scarcities as a result of which we mutually depend on each other to live well. This view of human nature rejects the quality of meanness as a genuine human and moral quality. This point supports my claim in the foregoing chapters that MacIntyre's social method which was based on practice–narrative–tradition cannot provide a full measure of morality, and—as he himself has admitted—it needs to be based on some features of human nature.

MacIntyre's moral theory, thus, is different from moral relativism in virtue of the fact that it offers some universal meanings for the virtues, which can be used for the evaluation of different existing states of affairs. The universal definitions of the virtues share the point that our transactions with each other should not be governed by individual and subjective preferences; rather, they should be managed by objective and non-discriminatory measures which direct us toward the internal goods of practices. This universal definition of the virtues is compatible with the existence of different codes for the virtues in different contexts, but it sets some limits on this variation as this qualification follows a logic, which makes it different from relativism.

---

[27] My reason for using the qualification "sometimes" is the point I have frequently mentioned in the previous chapters, namely, that there seems to be a conflict in MacIntyre's works between, on the one hand, his view that the individual is not a substantial moral agent independent of his social and cultural setting, and, on the other hand, the view that there is a true end for human beings which requires us to take a human being as a substantial moral agent.

152

MacIntyre's social teleology works well; however, it fails when an entire human culture degenerates into a state in which some of genuine human values such as hospitality and generosity do not any longer count as good. An example for this is the case of the Ik people, as it is described in the anthropologist Colin Turnbull's work *The Mountain People* (1973), who as a result of natural calamities and scarcities lost the recognition of genuine values such as hospitality and generosity. MacIntyre (1975, p.14) claims that discoveries show that the Ik had once enjoyed genuine human social bonds; however, in my view, in order to determine what genuine human social bonds are we need an account of human nature that specifies what its genuine and real needs are, which apply to different traditions and circumstances. MacIntyre's later turn to a metaphysical account of the natural law tradition is a useful move in this direction; nevertheless, I will argue in chapter 6 on the basis of a vulnerability approach that human basic goods would work better for this purpose than does the notion of the good. Accordingly, I think the tenor of MacIntyre's thought as a result of his Aristotelian and Thomistic background is alien to relativism of any sort, but I think he should revise some of his rhetoric regarding the existence of different codes of the virtues in different cultures in order not to imply relativism. For this purpose, his distinction between the primary and secondary precepts of the natural law is useful, as according to this distinction the particularity of the secondary precepts follows a logic that can be inter-traditionally evaluated. That this logic can be inter-traditionally evaluated might seem question-begging, as this requires the existence of some trans-traditional measures which relativism denies. However, I will try in chapter 6 to provide an answer to this on the basis of the basic human goods that apply to all human beings.

It would be difficult to hold that all values are tradition or culture-relative. There are some values that even the relativist cannot deny are true in all traditions, among which are what MacIntyre calls the virtues and ethics of enquiry. The relativist in order to justify that relativism is true should acknowledge that truth is good, and this requires him to abide by the ethics of enquiry when he is arguing with his opponents. Among these

virtues are "justice in conversation", that proponents of different views have appropriate time and possibility to present their reasons, and to expect to be addressed "truthfully and undeviously" and be trusted to speak truthfully and undeviously (1999c, p.6). These virtues are in fact the precepts of the natural law. Accordingly, MacIntyre should revise his saying that the existence of essential human qualities is compatible with there being different codes of them in different cultures, in a way that firstly admits the restriction upon this variation, and secondly clarifies that this limited variation follows a logic which itself can sometimes be used to evaluate cultures. This logic if it can be argued for inter-traditionally differentiates MacIntyre's case from relativism. Let us now consider some criticisms of MacIntyre on moral relativism.

S. Feldman (1986, pp.312-316) criticizes MacIntyre's moral theory as being prone to relativism. Her view rests on her discontent with MacIntyre's account of practice/narrative/tradition. As was pointed to above, MacIntyre considers it possible to find some universal features as human qualities in the diversity of the virtues. Feldman (1986, p.317) objects to this claim, and argues that MacIntyre in fact has assumed the role of a novelist or fictionist in his moral theorizing. A novelist knows well the moral character of his characters, because he has written them in the novel. The moral life of characters in a novel is thin; while we as real moral players have thick moral lives informed by competing practices, narratives and traditions. We are not informed by single and consistent narratives. In Feldman's view, MacIntyre cannot withstand the criticism of relativism, because each stage of practice/narrative/tradition is open to different internal standards among which individuals have to decide, and so these stages cannot accord objectivity and rationality to our moral life.

In my view, Feldman errs in holding that the internal goods of practices quite often depend on individual choices. Let us consider her own example of a tennis player who should decide which rule to abide by:

> Let us suppose I am playing tennis. The ball is returned to me and hits very close to the line. I must now call the ball "in" or "out". I am unsure how to call this ball; however,

> since I must make a call so that the game can continue I
> must decide whether the ball hit the line or not. In other
> words, I must decide how to apply the rule to this given
> case (Feldman 1986, p.311).

I disagree with Feldman's suggestion that how the individual should apply the rule is just up to him. The application of rules, like their definitions, is not an individualistic enterprise. Individuals learn the definition and the correct application of rules from others. In all practices and traditions there are authorities for the correct application of rules. In rare cases, when there is silence regarding the correct application of rules, the individual should decide how to apply the rule not *qua* an individual but *qua* an agent who acts according to the internal good of the practice, and chooses according to some established norms in the practice. For instance, in the above example, the agent is not free to call the ball in or out as he wishes or as his interests require. He learns to do so through his collective experience of how people normally behave in these circumstances. Of course, there remain places for disagreements in each practice and among different traditions regarding how we regulate our relationships or how to apply some rules; however, the extent of this disagreement can be limited when our basic needs are at stake. Feldman's account of practice, in which she insists on individualistic and conflicting measures, is a modern liberal version different from MacIntyre's account. MacIntyre's definition of practices indicates that individual choices should be governed by standards of excellence and of the good (1981, p.190).

The discussion so far has addressed the difference between MacIntyre's moral theory and moral relativism. I argued that MacIntyre can escape this charge, because both his earlier social and his later metaphysical approaches appeal to some criteria, the human *telos* or universal human qualities respectively. The notion of *telos* is wider than the notion of function which is defined in social contexts. If there is a context-transcending notion of *telos* or essence and the good for human beings *qua* human beings, it will provide some independent measures for dismissing the charge of moral relativism. MacIntyre's account of practice is also different

155

from moral relativism in that he sees a list of necessary virtues for all genuine human cultures, but as was discussed above, a problem for his view is that he thinks this account is compatible with the existence of different codes and criteria for these virtues; a claim that I argued should be qualified to draw a clearer line between his account and moral relativism. In the next section, I will compare MacIntyre's theory of truth, or its constitution thesis element, with cognitive relativism.

IV.3.1.2 MacIntyre's View as Distinct from Cognitive Relativism

After discussing MacIntyre's case against moral relativism, in this section I will compare his CT with cognitive relativism. By cognitive relativism, I mean the view that measures of truth and rationality are context-dependent. According to cognitive relativism, MacIntyre (1988a, p.364) holds that, since standards of rationality and truth are context-dependent, a tradition's claims to rationality and truth should always be sustained; in other words, because there is no transcending perspective from which to evaluate the tradition's standards of rationality and truth, its claim to rationality and truth is not thought to be challenged.[28]

Though MacIntyre's CT surely has some relativistic connotations, as it emphasizes the dependence of measures of rationality on traditions, he believes this notion is distinct from relativism. In an interview, MacIntyre (1994a, p.46) states this anti-relativistic attitude as follows: "I don't think that cultural difference has the last word, for I am, after all, an Aristotelian. But I do think that cultural difference ought to have the first word." He also holds that we can recognize and respect a variety of views without being moral relativists (1999c, p.8). The fact that cultural differences are starting-

---

[28] In passing, I think MacIntyre's contention here that according to relativism the truth-claims of traditions are always valid and inviolable is flawed; because, it is possible for traditions at any stage of their life to change their own internal measures, such that what hitherto has been taken as true, turns out now to be false. In other words, I do not think that all relativists hold that the claims of traditions are or should always be valid based on their own standards. They could allow, in agreement with their relativism, that their claims might be refuted, as a result of the replacement of the old measures by some new measures. In this case, the dependence of the new claims on the internal standards, which is the relativist' claim, still persists.

points that can and should be grappled with in order to achieve truth indicates MacIntyre's non-relativism.

MacIntyre disputes the relativistic assumption that a tradition's truth-claims remain valid, and argues that traditions' claims to truth and rationality indeed might be vitiated according to their own internal measures of truth and rationality. A tradition might discover its inadequacies on the basis of its own standards of truth and rationality (1988a, p.364).

According to relativism, no standpoint can make truth-claims in the sense of corresponding to reality. In this view, truth-claims are only claims about the rational justification of beliefs according to the standards of a tradition. The claim to rational justification or to warranted assertibility cannot transcend the tradition in order to correspond with reality. MacIntyre (2006h, p.207) is against these minimal understandings of truth, and defends a substantial realist theory of truth which indicates the correspondence of true claims to reality. Accordingly, if MacIntyre can justify the distinction between truth and rationality, he would be able to refute cognitive relativism as this assimilates truth to warranted assertibility in conceptual schemes.

This realist notion of truth had been criticized by M. Dummett as involving a conceptual leap from justifiability to truth for which there is no justification. The use of the predicate "truth", in Dummett's view (1990, p.14), "is deeply embedded in our implicit grasp of the use of our language", but this is not *per se* a defence of a realist notion of truth. Dummett (1990, pp.13-14) holds that "sophisticated linguistic operations, and, above all, the use of compound tenses and of conditional sentences … demanded a tacit appeal to the conception of objective truth"; while, in fact, this realist sense of truth does not hold, and it is a product of our linguistic operations to assume such a realist relation.

MacIntyre (2006c, p.55) is opposed to this reductionist approach. One reason which MacIntyre offers for a realist notion of truth is that the partisans of competing views who have intractable disputes over a practical issue due to their incompatible internal standards of rational justification do not present their arguments as being only valid in their own conceptual

scheme; each of them, rather, considers his own view true and rationally superior to its rivals (2006c, p.60). Each of them considers the compatible theories as being related and as being about one single subject-matter; and of course, each of these partisans takes his own theory as the true one; otherwise, if the partisans took their views as only valid in their own framework, these views did not conflict with each other, and so any possibility of refutation would disappear, except on internal grounds.

MacIntyre (2006c, pp.62-63) also to justify his view regarding the distinction between truth/justification takes sides with Peter Geach by holding that assertions have truth-value; the thesis that Geach then calls the Frege point. To clarify this point, I shall draw upon J. Haldane's explanation. In Haldane's account (1999, p.165), the point in summary is that assertion, which is a logical category distinct from assertiveness as a psychological category, by its nature aims at truth. There is a conceptual link between assertion and truth such that to assert p is to hold that p is true. Asserting it is raining means that one is claiming the truth of the proposition "it is raining". From this perspective, premises in a syllogism in order to have a logical connection with each other should be truth-assessable; in other words, propositions should have truth-value.

In my view, this linguistic approach is not sufficient to defend a realist theory of truth. This approach, at best, points to our natural and linguistic inclination to have a realist theory of truth, which as Dummett (1990, pp.13-14) pointed out above, might be the result of our complex linguistic needs, and it does not guarantee that we can arrive at objective truths in our enquiries, particularly in our moral enquiries which are fraught with value-judgments. In other words, this linguistic point does not *per se* justify the possibility of having a realist theory of truth, and it only shows our tendency to claim truth in the sense of correspondence with reality.

MacIntyre in order to illustrate the distinction between the notions of truth and rational justification compares their relation to the relation between physical objects and sense-data, and between pain and the bodily expressions of pain. A physical object cannot be reduced to its relevant

158

sense-data, and it cannot be constructed out of its sense-data; the same is true for pain and bodily expressions of pain; the latter in each case presupposes the former; as MacIntyre puts it:

> Bodily expressions of pain have to be already understood in terms of pain, if they are to be understood as expressions of pain and not as something else, and not vice versa, and sense-data equally have to be already understood in terms of physical objects and not vice versa. So too justifiability has to be already understood in terms of truth and not vice versa. There is no conceptual gap waiting to be crossed (2006c, p.65).

Rational justifications as well as the idealization of rational justifications, MacIntyre (2006c, p.58) holds, are conducted and assessed in systematic enquiries in different traditions. We can, however, evaluate these different systematic enquiries when the truth about the subject-matter of these enquires is at stake; when the truth is achieved, "the relevant set of rational justification has served its purpose" (2006c, p.58).

Based on this, I think R. Stern (1994, p.151) makes a mistake by comparing MacIntyre to L. Laudan in that both emphasize the internal evaluation of rationality and conceptual changes. Stern has interpreted MacIntyre's method for inter-cultural and inter-traditional evaluation exclusively on the basis of the efficacy of a theory in puzzle-solving and has not explained MacIntyre's appeal to a realistic theory of truth according to which truth lies in knowing how things are in reality independent of particular perspectives.

In MacIntyre's view (2006h, p.207), it is meaningless to ask a proponent of a minimalist theory of truth, like that of warranted assertibility, who asserts that p, whether "indeed things are really as they are described in p"; because it does not make sense for a relativist to speak of indeed and really which conveys a kind of independence from traditions. MacIntyre is against the reduction of the notion of truth to a minimal notion such as warranted assertibility which does not go beyond justification, or to a redundant notion as is the case in redundancy and disquotational theories of truth according to which the predicate "is true" does not add anything to a

159

proposition which contains an assertion (2006f, p.147). However, as was explained in the foregoing chapter, we should note that MacIntyre is not claiming that truth-claims do not need to be justified, or that there is no relation between the two. On the contrary, in his view, any claim to truth is accompanied with a claim regarding its rational justifiability. The holder of a true claim is committed to believing that his claim is justified, or in my terms, at least justifiable, and that the counter-arguments against it are not sound arguments, due to some false premises or invalid inferences. In other words, a true theory or a true account should be the most adequate account of an object, and the truth-holder should be able to justify this adequacy by measures that are not just internal to that perspective (2006c, p.55);[29] MacIntyre also states the same point a good deal earlier:

> ...the question of the truth or falsity of the belief studied is to some degree independent of the question of rationality; but, although this distinction must not be ignored, truth and rationality are both conceptually and empirically related. For to advance reasons is always to advance reasons for holding that a belief is true or false; and rational procedures are in fact those which yield us the only truths of which we can be assured. Thus, to recognize a belief as rationally held is to lay oneself open to at least the possibility of its truth (1971a, p.249)

The discussion so far shows that MacIntyre intends to distinguish his theory of truth from relativism. The question which remains is whether he can truly justify the possibility of this distinction, in order to be immune to cognitive relativism.

I discussed in the second chapter the role of traditions in constituting practical rationalities; if this is the case, how is it possible to give priority to a particular version of practical rationality over other versions in terms of its

---

[29]We should note that MacIntyre, contrary to perspectivism, believes that we can know the thing as it is independent of our perspective. The rational justification that leads to a true account should be open to challenges from outside the tradition. This shows that indeed rational justification should not be internal to just a tradition, as it has to deal with different objections and accounts from a variety of traditions. If this is the case, MacIntyre's emphasis that "Rational moral enquiry then is always conducted from within someone['s]particular moral standpoint" would be problematic (1999c, p.7). Dialogue with others might make a view transcend single perspectives.

truth-claims? Or, how is it possible to appeal to a correspondence theory of truth on occasions where there are disputes among traditions? Which tradition can claim truth on these occasions? This question becomes more pressing when we are theorizing about moral issues which are heavily affected by value-judgments, and in which we do not have a direct access to reality to check the truth.

MacIntyre's main notion invoked here, which can be used to address these challenges, is the notion of "epistemological crisis", to be explained below; but suffice here to mention that, in MacIntyre's view (1988a, pp.361-363), when a tradition faces an epistemological crisis by its own standards, it might find resources in other traditions which resolve the crisis better than does the tradition itself. This means that in this situation the alien tradition is rationally superior to the first tradition according to the first tradition's own internal measures. In line with this, MacIntyre's main argument against relativism is that it is possible for any tradition to face an epistemological crisis according to its own measures, and to overcome the crisis using others' resources (1988a, p.364); which shows we can compare traditions with each other to refute relativism.

That and how, in MacIntyre's view, rational theorizing depends on traditions was discussed in chapter 2. The main point related to this issue is that rationality is always measured by some standards that might vary from tradition to tradition. The main task for MacIntyre in his theory of truth is to justify how this tradition-relevant rationality can allow a correspondence theory of truth with non-relativistic and non-perspectivistic features. Due to the importance of the notion of epistemological crisis (hereafter EC) in MacIntyre's argument against relativism, I devote the next section to this issue, and then continue the discussion of MacIntyre's distinction from cognitive relativism.

IV.3.1.2.1 EC as an Occasion and Method for Inter-traditional Intellectual Exchanges

MacIntyre (2006a, p.3) has explained the notion of EC by giving an analogy. He depicts a situation in which an employee thinks that he is really valued by his employer, but contrary to his expectation, the employer suddenly fires him. The employee in this case faces an EC, because for him the relation between seems/is has been called into question. The employee used to think that he was satisfying the employer, which later on turns out not to be the case. In the same manner, ordinary people encounter epistemological problems, like the problems of other minds, justification and induction, which consist in the question about how we can transcend our mental personal knowledge to know about others or the world, or how we can generalize the results of our limited observations.

There are at least two issues involved in the different kinds of EC as understood by MacIntyre. The first is that the crisis-theory/tradition discovers a defect in its own cognitive or explanatory capacities. It faces a situation which it cannot consistently make intelligible, and which it cannot understand or justify using its own cognitive and explanatory resources. The second is that this state might be recognized according to the internal standards of the tradition or the theory. Indeed, what is crucial about an EC is that it is identified by the very standards of the tradition or the theory in which the EC occurs. If the tradition/theory adheres to its own hitherto valid measures, it will fall into an inconsistency over a situation that it cannot handle. For instance, the discovery of a new truth might render a narrative unintelligible (2006a, pp.3-5). However, the mere occurrence of some counter-evidence cannot simply falsify a theory or make a narrative or tradition unintelligible. Theories or traditions usually, as MacIntyre (1988a, p.355) has argued, resist an EC by providing some new interpretations of their own positions or of the counter-evidence to accommodate them within the existing frameworks; or they simply try to bracket and neglect the inconsistencies; however, the theory/tradition might reach a critical stage at which it can no longer handle the challenges with its own resources. At this stage, the theory/tradition might invent some new methods and resources to

162

make itself coherent and intelligible from within itself, but again the crisis might be so devastating that it leaves no possibility for the theory/tradition to contain the crisis based on its new resources; accordingly, it is possible for the "tradition-constituted" enquiry that by its own standards of truth and progress, its hitherto valid methods and resources become barren (1988a, pp.361-362), and this is the procedure that MacIntyre uses to distinguish his theory from relativism.

The barren tradition has no resort but to look to the resources of other or even rival traditions.[30] If the barren tradition finds appropriate resources in other traditions, it should admit by its own standards that the rival tradition is better equipped and so rationally superior than it itself to resolve the EC (1988a p.365). The rival tradition in this way exposes the inadequacies of the crisis-tradition, and so reveals that the beliefs of this tradition, which were hit by crisis, do not correspond with reality:

> What the explanation afforded from within the alien tradition will have disclosed is a lack of correspondence between the dominant beliefs of their own tradition and the reality disclosed by the most successful explanation and it may well be the only successful explanation which they have been able to discover. Hence the claim to truth for what have hitherto been their own beliefs has been defeated (1988a, p.365).

That MacIntyre, as the quote above indicates, derives the falsity of an inadequate theory/tradition from its inadequacy to withstand epistemological crisis points to (1) his appeal to Aquinas' notion of adequacy in his theory of truth, which here applies to a theory (1988a,

---

[30] A question that comes to my mind in passing is that why we should limit the occasions on which traditions learn or should learn from each others to these critical situations. The way in which MacIntyre presents the issue suggests that traditions pursue their paths based on their own standards until they face an epistemological crisis. By contrast, I think traditions have contact with each other in their ordinary lives when they have not yet faced crises. In fact, it is difficult to imagine traditions to conduct their enquiries in a pure environment in which they only employ their own standards of rationality.

p.356)[31], and (2) the conceptual connection that he draws between the two notions of rationality and truth, that is, the lack of rational justification for a truth-claim shows that this claim cannot be held anymore.

The application of the idea of EC explained above requires that the crisis-agent be able to understand the conceptual resources of a rival tradition as they are understood by its exponents, and to apply these resources to its own crisis-tradition (2006a, pp.8-9); however, this interaction, in MacIntyre's view, should occur in the context of the crisis-tradition to count as an intelligible and rational way of solving the EC (2006a, pp.8-9). In other words, the tradition should recognize its crisis and the solution offered by the rival tradition according to its own standards of truth and rationality; but this depends on an earlier stage involving a charitable understanding of the rival tradition. The point is that the crisis-tradition should understand the other tradition in the rival's own terms by learning their language as "a second first language", as will be explained later in the present chapter, applying the resources of that tradition to itself based on its own internal measures.

As an example of this, MacIntyre (1991b, p.117) argues that the Aristotelian tradition needs to access the history of Confucianism written from a Confucian point of view, and vice versa. This indicates that the understanding of other traditions should be by the others' own measures, but the application of these resources, their assessment and efficacy in solving an EC should be judged internally.

As the discussion above suggests, MacIntyre's view of rationality allows a rational relation and exchange between rival traditions. There seem to be, in MacIntyre's view, no impenetrable barriers in the way of mutual understandings of developing traditions (1988a, p.358). It is possible at some point for a developing tradition to recognize that some of its issues are being discussed in other traditions, and so the possibility of agreement and

---

[31] I note here again that this point, i.e. the falsity of an inadequate theory, although it might be something that we can infer from Aquinas, is a very straightforward issue which does not need the perplexity of Aquinas' thought.

disagreement among them develops. In my terms, though traditions might have some incompatible measures of rationality and the like, they still are able to have a second-order understanding of each other, which means they can understand what they are arguing about; they understand the claims of other traditions in their own terms, even if the claims are formed from a rival perspective. In other words, the fact that the advocates of a tradition differ substantially from others does not mean that they are cognitively unable to understand their claims charitably from the rival's perspective. This issue is relevant to my discussion in chapter 2 of the distinction between normative and ontological transcendence by an agent. The agent in order to have a true understanding of others' claims, which is an understanding faithful to their own intentions and the meaning they give to their own concepts, does not need to abstract himself ontologically from his formed identity; it will suffice for him to have the capacity to detach himself normatively from his beliefs in order to have a charitable knowledge of others. This is why I claimed in chapter 2 that the conceptual and ontological interpretation of traditions might lead us to a misunderstanding of MacIntyre by interpreting him in a conservative manner; while his theory has reformist, and indeed, revolutionary aspects.

A new tradition that might resolve an EC, in MacIntyre's view (1988a, p.362), should meet three conditions. The first is that the new and the conceptually richer scheme should provide systematic and coherent answers to the insoluble questions of the first tradition. The second is that the new scheme must be able to explain what has been wrong with the former scheme, which has rendered it sterile or incoherent or both. The third is that the new concepts and structures added to the former scheme must show some "fundamental continuity" with the defining shared beliefs of the crisis-tradition to preserve its integrity:

> It is perhaps in the capacity to recognize the poverties and defects of one's own culture and to move, so far as is possible, towards remedying it, without in the process discarding that culture in its integrity, that the greatness of a social and cultural order is shown (2006b, p.50).

The new theses that resolve an EC are either adopted from a new tradition or are the products of "imaginative conceptual innovation" from within the crisis-tradition itself. In MacIntyre's view (1988a, p.362), these new theses are not derivable from the older theses which have not been capable of resolving the crisis. The emphasis on "imaginative conceptual innovation" again suggests that, in MacIntyre's view, individuals are not firmly constituted by their traditions. They can use other traditions' resources, or exercise imaginative conceptual innovation, provided that they are not trapped in a closed society governed by an ideology like that of Stalinism which attempts to delimit "the stock of concepts" that are available to them (1962, p.60). Accordingly, MacIntyre's CT is not too thick to prevent this inter-traditional understanding. As argued above, MacIntyre here demands that inter-traditional exchanges be conducted in continuity with the measures and the foundations of a crisis-tradition; a condition that refers to the CT in the methodological sense which was explained in chapter 2 (1988a, p.362).

The examples of conceptual innovation mentioned by MacIntyre include a new interpretation of the notion of the Trinity in the fourth century, which ended the controversies over the issue at that time, and Aquinas' attempts to reconcile the Aristotelian and Augustinian traditions (1988a, p.362).

A key element in traditions' mutual relations and understandings is learning the language of rival traditions. MacIntyre (1988a, p.364) maintains that the people in crisis-traditions should learn the languages of alien but richer traditions as a second first language. By this, MacIntyre means the person should become as a child again to learn the new language and the new culture. The new language should not be learnt through sentence by sentence translation. A child does not learn its language in this way, as it does not have any prior language to match the new language with. Individuals by living in a different culture for a long time can transform themselves, to the extent that is possible, into native inhabitants. If it is not possible to live in certain other cultures as they no longer exist, people can

immerse themselves in texts left by them to become as far as possible "almost, if not quite surrogate participants" in these societies. The new language should be learnt as a second first language or not at all. The people who are so participating in the new culture, or are immersed in its texts, come to understand which sentences of the two languages are not translatable into each other (1988a, p.374).

MacIntyre's insistence that the enquirer should become as a child in order to learn an alien language as his second first language has misled A. J. Roque (1991) to argue for its impossibility. Roque (1991, p.614) asks how it is possible for an adult to "acquire the linguistic fluency of a native":

> Once initiated into a tradition by/in learning a language (and vice versa), how can an adult become a child again, particularly in light of MacIntyre's insistence that (1) a tradition cannot be adopted or discarded as a change of clothing and (2) that pre-conceptual interests do not operate in sustained forms in independence of theory-informed presuppositions (Roque 1991, 615-616)?

In my view, Roque has not grasped well MacIntyre's notion of becoming as a child for the purpose of understanding an alien language. MacIntyre by this notion has a metaphorical sense in mind. Becoming a child is a metaphor for MacIntyre to show that the empathetic translation from an alien tradition should not be by way of sentence-to-sentence and literal translation. The language learner should immerse himself in the new tradition to learn the cultural and the belief background of its words and expressions, and to realize what is or is not expressible in the new language given its background. The agent in having and exerting this capacity does not need to actually return to his childhood; all that is needed is a sympathetic understanding of alien beliefs.

With regard to Roque's reference to MacIntyre's idea that "a tradition cannot be adopted or discarded as a change of clothing" cited above, I would argue that the empathetic understanding of others is different from adopting or discarding their positions. MacIntyre himself (1988a, pp.367-368) has disputed the perspectivistic interpretation of adopting positions as

clothes-changing. MacIntyre has brought to our attention that "genuinely to adopt the standpoint of a tradition thereby commits one to its view of what is true and false and, in so committing one, prohibits one from adopting any rival standpoint" (1988a, p.387); however, in my view, the commitment to a particular standpoint does not make the agent incapable of understanding what it means to believe and live in other traditions, as MacIntyre argues to be necessary regarding the Aristotelian-Confucianism relationship (1991b, p.117). Though the agent might not be able to apply those alien concepts consistently to his own tradition, he is able to understand the belief-system of the alien tradition as it is understood by them.

Roque expects MacIntyre to prove this capacity for human beings, and not only to assert it, as being consistent with his CT. What gives this assertive, rather than argumentative, sense to MacIntyre's idea here is that he has expressed his ideas through metaphors that sometimes are misleading. MacIntyre's view here needs some metaphysical support. One way of providing this metaphysical support is by invoking the Thomistic account of the soul/intellect as an abstract entity that is not totally tied to a material body or to a social setting; an explanation which at least the later MacIntyre would be sympathetic to.

The immateriality of the soul/intellect and its universalizing activity, which were discussed in chapters 2 and 3[32], gives it the power to distance itself from contingent situations in which it has been operating. This feature allows the soul/intellect to have a second-order understanding of itself and others. By a second-order understanding, I mean the soul/intellect is able to consider its own or others' thoughts from a higher perspective in order to see what it means to think in this or another way from the others' perspectives.

---

[32]As I explained in chapter 3, for Aquinas the intellect only formally becomes equal to the object. This, as will be explained further in this chapter, supports the notion of the immateriality of the intellect, which means the intellect always sustains its distance from its objects. My point here is that MacIntyre, consistently with his Thomism, cannot think otherwise on this issue.

This capacity of abstraction is acquired by the soul/intellect in a process of gradual practice and apprenticeship, and so has some moral aspects. As was argued in chapter 3, MacIntyre (2006j, p.78) holds moral enquirers should possess moral and intellectual asceticism in order to be immune to influences which debar them from the truth. This requires an enquirer to enter into rational dialogue with opposing views and not to assume from the outset that he is in the right; as MacIntyre puts it, "It may be that we are in the right or it may be that those who hold the opposing view are in the right or it may be that neither of us is. We have therefore to resort to enquiry as to what the truth about these matters is, in company with those others who hold opposing views" (2006j, p.76). Although any rational moral enquiry is conducted from within a standpoint, its proponents can enter into a constructive conversation with their rivals and find shared standards if they incorporate the ethics of enquiry into their own perspective (1999c, p.7).

Such an enquirer is able to adhere to his beliefs and conceptual scheme in an alien context, and to feel "to some degree at home" there (1988a, p.395); nevertheless, he can and is morally required to assume a transcendental perspective relative to his own and to-the alien viewpoint to understand what it means to believe in the new way. For instance, a theist whose personal character and way of enquiry are informed by theistic values is still able to look at the world through the eyes of an atheist to see what the world is like from that perspective. This does not mean that he should commit itself to two incompatible values and norms. As MacIntyre (1988a, p.370) has pointed out, the fact that rival traditions can see each other as rivals indicates that they can understand each other to some significant degree. This approach to inter-traditional exchange does not commit MacIntyre to neutrality, as is claimed by Roque (1991, p.616). The individual who seeks to understand an alien tradition can temporarily put aside his own perspective to assume new values and norms. The new measures are not neutral, so the agent in adopting new measures is not neutral. The agent in this state is informed by different kinds of values, for instance, the value of coming to understand other people fairly in their own

169

terms, or as MacIntyre (2006b, p.74) puts it "the virtues of objectivity", or the virtues of enquiry (1999c, p.7); accordingly, the agent is not neutral at this stage either; of course the agent should be neutral temporarily with regard to the truth of his views and of the opposing views while he still holds on to his views in a first-order perspective. MacIntyre cites Aquinas in support of the idea that, by looking from other perspectives, individuals can overcome their own one-sidedness (2006j, p.73).

To explain this another way, human beings have multi-layered personalities some of which might be constituted in traditions; however, along with the constitution of these layers, they develop meta-layers from which they can understand what it means to think from other perspectives. It is possible to explain this capacity in evolutionary terms as a condition of survival and competence. It is also possible to explain it in light of Aquinas' metaphysics of knowledge as being based on the immateriality of the intellect, as MacIntyre has also used this idea which will be explained later in this chapter in my discussion of perspectivism.

A culture or tradition when it encounters another culture or tradition might be able to recognize the superiority of the other tradition according to its own standards. An illuminating example here given by MacIntyre is a culture that lacks an advanced colour-vocabulary when it faces another culture with a greater vocabulary and a wider range of colour distinctions. The first culture by its own standards, which are embodied in its practice of painting, comes to learn the superiority of the second culture with respect to colour distinction. Though colour-vocabularies might vary from culture to culture, this does not lead to relativism regarding colours and the world, because some cultures might prove to have more developed vocabularies and colour distinctions as a result of their involvement in practices of painting; as MacIntyre puts the point, "what type of color vocabulary painters need and the range of uses to which they put that vocabulary depends in part upon the tasks specific to different periods of painting" (2006b, p.48). The inhabitants of a culture with a limited stock of colour-vocabulary through their relation to other cultures might come to realize that

170

the practice of painting in those cultures offers a more adequate colour-vocabulary and more colour distinctions than does their own conceptual scheme, and thus it is more adequate to "the realities of colour disclosed by the practice of painting" (2006b, p.50). A culture in which blue and green count as one single colour-category, due to the fact that its inhabitants had not felt the need to distinguish between them according to their current stage of the practice of painting, might come to know that it can better describe reality using these two colours as distinct ones. After explaining MacIntyre's notion of EC as a way that he has taken to show his own distinction from relativism, in what follows I shall put forth some criticisms of him on this issue, and then I finally evaluate his response to relativism. In sum, MacIntyre's point here was that, contrary to relativism, a tradition might be refuted, and acknowledge the rationality superiority of a rival based on its own standards, and this is what, in his view, dispels the charge of relativism.

IV.3.1.2.2 Some Criticisms of MacIntyre on His Stance toward Relativism

Several critics have pointed out that there is an inconsistency in MacIntyre's account of rationality in traditions and between traditions. H. Putnam (1995, p.268), J. C. Isaac (1989, p.667), R. J. Wallace (1989, p.337), T. Mosteller (2006, p.70), on similar grounds, have argued that MacIntyre cannot make his view that traditions can rationally defeat each other consistent with his CT, and so cannot overcome relativism. Let us consider their arguments.

Putnam (1995, p.267) contends that MacIntyre's view of rationality is like that of Kuhn with regard to paradigm-change in science; however, Putnam holds that MacIntyre has left out one important element of Kuhn's enterprise which is experiment associated with the idea of fallibilism. In Putnam's account (1995, p.267), MacIntyre's methodology is "deeply flawed" as it is bereft of this fallibilism. As a result, MacIntyre's methodology is closely related to what C. S. Peirce rejects, which is the method of "What Is Agreeable to Reason", as not being fallibilistic and

experimental like the methodology of the sciences; I quote Putnam (1995, pp.267-268):

> To judge ideas simply on the basis of their ability to resolve difficulties without putting them under strain, without testing them, without trying to falsify them is to proceed prescientifically. Peirce would agree with MacIntyre that rational decision between paradigms requires reflection and discussion. More than any scientific philosopher of his time, Peirce stressed that scientific method is not just a matter of experimentation, but experimentation and testing remain crucial in the formation of rational beliefs about matters of fact.

I think Putnam's criticism of MacIntyre on the infallibility of his account is mistaken, and it is not based on an adequate attention to MacIntyre's works. MacIntyre has emphasized on different occasions the fallibilistic feature of his theory of truth. I discussed in the preceding chapter MacIntyre's attempt to read a Peircean/Popperian fallibilism into Aquinas' theory of truth based on the notion of adequacy of the intellect. Suffice it here to recall that for MacIntyre (2006c, p.59) a necessary condition for any perspective that claims rational superiority or truth for its theories is to hold them open to falsification and intellectual challenges. Accordingly, it is not fair to claim that MacIntyre's theory of truth does not feature fallibilism.

Another objection to Putnam's view here is that MacIntyre's account of rationality and truth is mainly in the field of morality, and not in the field of the natural sciences. If this is the case, a question arises regarding how we can apply experiments and tests to moral theories. The kind of experiments that are applicable to moral theories includes fallible reasoning upon which MacIntyre has laid much emphasis. The onus is upon Putnam to explain how the notion of experiment as it applies to natural science can work in morality.

While the idea of experiment might not fit morality, we can in this field appeal to a notion of experience. This might find application to morality along the lines of the vulnerability approach which I will introduce in the

172

final chapter. Based on this approach, we can observe the practical results of the application of a moral theory with regard to the people who are affected by it. We can see whether the application of a theory makes its subjects better off or not, and whether the provision of some goods enhances their normal and desirable functioning. This, however, requires us to consider long-term results, which might be different from a direct experimental observation. Accordingly, the kind of falsification that is found in the natural sciences cannot be expected for moral theories.

Putnam (1995, pp.268-269) also holds that MacIntyre, as a defender of the Golden Age, tends "to immunize institutionalized oppression from criticism". But if MacIntyre admits the possibility and the necessity of criticism as a way to move enquiries forward, and lays emphasis on "the virtues of objectivity" in order to save us from influences that might distract us from accepting our faults, this line of criticism would not work against him, either.

MacIntyre's moral and political theory, in fact, has a democratic aspect, as it emphasizes the necessity of disagreement and conflict as conditions for enriching the common life of groups. He presents suppression as an evil, and welcomes the toleration of any point of view that is not disruptive to the possibility of "arriving at the kind of consensus necessary for effective shared decision-making" (2006p, pp.206-207). In other words, in MacIntyre's view, disagreement should be tolerated in as much as it does not produce the evil of disruption (2006p, p.206). This democratic aspect also appears when he defends the idea of "an educated public" which deliberates on the issues of general concern in public life, which in modern times has been deformed into professionalized intellectual groups and specialized publics which lack this function (1987a, p.25).

MacIntyre (1981, pp.194-195), in fact, by drawing a distinction between practices and institutions as places for respectively internal and external goods points to "the corrupting power of institutions" which tend to divert practices from their internal goods; the cooperative nature of practices and their care for the common good is vulnerable to the acquisitive nature of

173

institutions, and this makes clear that for MacIntyre no institution is immune to criticism and correction, in part, by the virtues which are necessary for sustaining practices (T. Burns 2011, pp.44-45).

Putnam (1995, p.268) further puts forward another criticism which I think is more nuanced than the ones presented above, and is shared by other critics including those who were listed above. The main point of the argument is that MacIntyre cannot make his account of rationality, as it applies to the relation between traditions, consistent with his view that rationality is internal to traditions, and that there are rationalities instead of rationality. The result of this inconsistency is, it is claimed, an entrenched relativism in MacIntyre's account; Putnam (1995, p.268) states the point as follows.

> MacIntyre insists that rationality (but not truth) is relative to one's paradigm. No historical or universalistic account of rationality can be given at all, he insists. And, he argues, rejecting claims to unrevisable possession of truth makes one a fallibilist. The charm of MacIntyre's writing lies precisely in displaying how such a "postmodern" mind can come to such traditional conclusions! But I cannot accept this defense for two reasons. First, although rationality is relative and historical (perhaps too relative and historical), in MacIntyre's view, there is a fixed principle governing rational discussion between paradigms, which allows one paradigm to sometimes "rationally defeat" another. It is in the application of this principle that MacIntyre is forced back upon what amounts to "What Is Agreeable to [MacIntyre's] Reason".

Before evaluating Putnam's claim, it is worth quoting from the other critics listed above, who have pointed to the alleged inconsistency mentioned above.

> MacIntyre is unclear about the status of his account. He consistently maintains that there is no such thing as rationality outside of constituted traditions. But it is clear that his theory of immanent criticism and encounter between traditions cannot be attributed to any of the traditions that he discusses. In short, MacIntyre's theory of rationality would seem to contradict his own claim about the tradition-bound character of all rationalities (J. C. Isaac 1989, p.667).

174

And even if such pluralism [about the good] can be avoided within the context of a single tradition, it seems bound to arise again when competing traditions of enquiry come into contact with one another. Here, it seems, we cannot appeal to the notion of tradition without falling prey to a kind of relativism: if traditions are what guide enquiry about the good, then when competing traditions lead to different answers there would appear to be no context for resolving the disagreement, hence no possibility of a non-arbitrary decision between the competing answers (R. J. Wallace 1989, p.337).

There is an inconsistency faced by anyone who claims both that there is no neutrality between competing tradition-bound knowledge claims, and that some particular perspective or tradition is better suited for enquiry than others, and that one can avoid relativism by giving an account (which is itself tradition dependent) of how traditions defeat one another, when that account may be rationally acceptable from within the tradition in which it is given, but not from within other traditions (T. Mosteller 2006, p.70).

To evaluate these claims, it is possible to understand the inconsistency charge in two ways. Let me first recall MacIntyre's claims regarding rationality within and between traditions.

(I) Rationality is internal to traditions.

(II) Traditions should hold themselves open to falsification, and indeed it is possible that they become refuted based on their own standards.

(III) A tradition that helps another tradition overcome an EC is rationally superior to the crisis-tradition based on the internal standards of the crisis-tradition.

(IV) As a result of establishing this rational superiority based on internal standards of rationality the charge of relativism is dispelled.

Some critics seem to take (I) to be inconsistent with the rest of the statements including (II). Mosteller (2006, p.64), for instance, holds this and also interprets Putnam as so stating:

> If someone from a tradition different from MacIntyre's who
> maintains ~iii [the reverse of iii; (iii) here is the view that
> there can be rational defeat of one tradition by another] is
> confronted with MacIntyre's claim that iii, then how is one
> to adjudicate between them? According to ii [(ii) here is the
> view that there is no neutral and tradition-transcending
> measure of rationality], there can be no appeal to some
> standard that is neutral between both traditions. Item iii
> seems to be functioning as something which is neutral
> between traditions, but according to ii, there is no such
> thing, and thus MacIntyre is inconsistent in maintaining ii
> and iii.

In response, I would argue that the point (iii) in the quote above, which is almost equivalent to my point (III) mentioned above, is not a measure or standard of rationality; rather, it is a matter of reasonableness. This is a response in terms of which we can defend MacIntyre against the charge of inconsistency, which is also clear in his insistence on the virtues and ethics of enquiry which require us to listen to and learn from our rivals (1999c, p.7). The explanation is that we should hold our views open to revision and falsification, even open to a falsification that originates from outside our tradition. This fallibilistic attitude, however, is necessary for being reasonable not for being rational. A tradition that claims to be irrefutable might be rational but is not reasonable. Measures of rationality are those foundational notions that form the bases of our premises. As contrasted with this, reasonableness does not address foundations of our premises; rather, it concerns the way we hold our beliefs against others; for instance, whether we impose our beliefs on others, and take them as dogmas; or rather, we are happy to enter into discursive reasoning with others to expose the possible inadequacies of our views.

J. Rawls (1993, p.53) also draws this distinction between the notion of rationality and reasonableness. Rationality for Rawls means the effective pursuit of one's ends; while reasonableness means the readiness to live with others upon equal terms which are reciprocally justifiable.

If we accept this distinction between rationality and reasonableness, we will not expect MacIntyre to derive this principle of reasonableness from

within a tradition, even though he holds that measures of rationality are tradition-specific. Based on this, I think M. Baghramian's (2004, p.136) claim regarding the inconsistency between, on the one hand, the universal value that MacIntyre assigns to "dialectical reasoning, test of coherence, dialogue, debate and method of argumentation", and on the other hand, his CT, does not hold, because these values are not matters of rationality, but are matters of reasonableness which apply to any reasonable human tradition. In other words, no reasonable human tradition can deny the role of listening to other traditions, as this condition relates to the undeniable limitedness of any human tradition; however, the problem arises regarding how different traditions after listening to each other can substantially learn from each other if they have different accounts of rationality and different values. In other words, if they employ different and incommensurable premises as measures of rationality, how would they be able to learn from each other?

In response, I would say we should not construe traditions as completely heterogeneous, and without any substantial agreement with each other. Although traditions might have disputes about controversial ethical views and about the human good and the best way of life, they might have a lot of agreements including about human basic needs. In the final chapter, I attempt to offer an account of morality that is based on basic human goods which apply to all human beings *qua* human beings. MacIntyre also does not deny the possibility of finding inter-traditional agreements; as he stated traditions by exercising the virtues of enquiry and entering into constructive conversation realize their shared values and agreements (1999c, p.7).

Another way to explain the rationality/reasonableness distinction is by holding that reasonableness, which governs the relation between rational agents, is a second-order rationality. First-order rationality is based on the internal measures of rationality in a tradition. The first-order rationality of a Thomist is different from that of a utilitarian and that of a Confucian; as MacIntyre holds what count as good reasons for divorcing a wife differ between these three incommensurable perspectives (2006c, pp.52-53).

177

Measures of second-order rationality, by contrast, are not dependent on traditions, and MacIntyre has not made such a claim either, though he has not explicitly drawn this distinction. Traditions, in so far as they are traditions of human beings, should abide by some minimal principles regarding their relations to outsiders, one of which is to hold themselves open to criticisms by these outsiders, which might possibly complement or refute their tradition.

MacIntyre has implicitly recognized the universality of measures of second-order rationality in his argument for the precepts of the natural law, which are valid for all human beings *qua* human beings. Recall his notions of "the virtues of objectivity" and "justice in conversation" which enjoin us to leave aside the psychological interests and influences that might unduly impede us from admitting the truth of a rival view (1999c, pp.6-7; 2006j, p.74). The willingness of a tradition to listen to other traditions is a condition of reasonableness which does not need to be derived from within the traditions. This condition sets some limits on traditions' measures of rationality, such that a tradition whose standards of rationality do not let it communicate with others is unreasonable.

To recall, I was arguing that some critics seem to see an inconsistency in MacIntyre's view between (I) and (II), that is, between taking rationality as being internal to a tradition, and the view that traditions should hold themselves open to revision and refutation. I argued that the latter is not basically a matter of rationality, so it does not conflict with the former. However, I think MacIntyre cannot dismiss the inconsistency between (I) and (III)/(IV) to which the critics listed above have also pointed. In other words, though the principle of listening to other traditions to enhance our views should not be expected to be derived from a tradition[33], the fruitfulness of this relation relies on the existence of some shared common standards between traditions. To put this more simply, the mere fact that a

---

[33]Note that this does not deny that a tradition might promote this principle; however, my point is that this principle is an *a priori* principle which does not depend on the substance of traditions.

tradition is open to its rival or to different traditions does not guarantee that it can learn from them, unless there are some substantial shared measures binding for all traditions by appeal to which they can correct each other; without these shared measures, it is not possible to refute relativism. In other words, in so far as MacIntyre overemphasizes the internality of measures of rationality even in acknowledging the rational superiority of another tradition, he cannot decisively defeat the charge of relativism, because the main tenet of relativism is that there are no valid canons of rationality beyond the scope of particular frameworks.

As was explained above in my discussion of EC, MacIntyre holds that epistemological crises might be known based on the crisis-tradition's own measures of rationality. But if MacIntyre does not go beyond internal measures of traditions, even when traditions discover their ECs, he cannot adequately dismiss the charge of cognitive relativism.

The appeal to the idea of reasonableness, as was explained above, cannot work well without assuming some shared standards. Reasonableness is a tendency on the part of individuals and traditions, but its practicability requires the existence of substantial shared measures. In the final chapter, I will offer an argument for justifying some shared measures for human beings *qua* rational beings.

Another critic of MacIntyre on the issue of relativism is R. M. Hare. Hare (1989, p.114) interprets MacIntyre as holding that words, not only evaluative words but also words in science and even proper nouns, are culture-bound. Based on this, Hare (1989, p.114) ascribes the view to MacIntyre that inter-cultural communication and rational argument are not possible, and this leads to relativism, because, as a result of the lack of sufficient shared vocabulary and values it is not possible to rationally evaluate the truth of the claims formed in different cultures. The root of this relativistic conclusion, Hare (1989, p.117) holds, lies in MacIntyre's descriptivist approach by which Hare almost means moral cognitivism, in the sense that moral statements have truth-value as they refer to moral facts.

To explain, Hare (1989, p.117) divides evaluative words into the two groups of primary and secondary evaluative words. Examples of primary evaluative words include the words "wrong" or "ought". The characteristic of these words is that all languages share them, and by means of them they can communicate with each other. As contrasted with this, secondary evaluative words such as the word "cruelty" have closer ties to specific cultures and depend on the attitudes of the people in a different culture. For instance, in some cultures what we would take as bad treatment of animals might not count as cruelty; however, if their attitudes in this regard change, the use of this term will be extended in that culture to include bad treatment of animals.

Since MacIntyre is a descriptivist, Hare (1989, p.117) maintains, and if descriptivism were correct, then the word "wrong" would become a purely descriptive term, and it cannot then be used for communication, because it could not be univocal in different cultures. The problem for inter-cultural communication is that the meanings of evaluative words, in MacIntyre's view as understood by Hare (1989, pp.120-121), are determined by the truth-conditions of the propositions in which the words are used. Having truth-conditions, in turn, requires conditions for the correct application of the descriptive expressions in them; as a result, all evaluative words become culture-bound which leads to relativism. The solution to this problem, for Hare (1989, p.128), is to insist on primary evaluative words such as wrongness which are not tied to cultures.

Hare (1989, p.122) contends that the descriptive meaning of primary evaluative words is secondary to the evaluative meaning and by a change in attitude, for instance toward animals, this descriptive meaning is more likely to give way; while the evaluative meaning remains unchanged. To put this more simply, prescriptive words do not get their meaning from truth-conditions; therefore, they are not affected by MacIntyre's view that there are different culture-bound measures of rationality and truth; neither are these prescriptive words included in Wittgenstein's insight that the application of language as a means of communication depends on

180

agreement not only in definition but also in judgments. In Hare's view (1989, p.127), this principle applies only to descriptive words which get their meanings from truth-conditions.

Hare (1989, p.128) concludes that there is no need for MacIntyre's pessimism regarding untranslatability and inter-cultural communication, because we can change our attitudes by rational arguments starting from more general evaluative words, i.e. primary evaluative words which cultures are more likely to share. As an example, the Sudanese and the American can reach agreement regarding the wrongness of the practice of female circumcision by forgetting the descriptive meanings of these words and emphasizing their shared notion of wrongness. If they become fully aware of the suffering caused by this practice and ask themselves if they are happy to universalize this suffering such that it includes themselves, they recognize the wrongness of this practice. If they do not have the word "wrong", they can learn it, which then leads them to admit the wrongness of some of their previous mores and customs. Accordingly, by the distinction between descriptive/prescriptive and the use of prescriptive resources many moral disputes can be resolved (Hare 1989, pp.129-130).

To assess Hare's criticism of MacIntyre, firstly I would say that his interpretation is not based on an adequate reading of MacIntyre's works. His construal is essentially based on chapter 19 of MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* entitled "Tradition and Translation" in which MacIntyre maintains that language is tied to the constituting shared beliefs of a tradition, and that this may lead to untranslatability of that language into another language which lacks those beliefs (1988a, p.375). In this view, indeed the use of proper nouns carries with itself commitment to some beliefs without which these names would not be used or mean the same; as MacIntyre (1988a, p.377) puts it "their [the names of people] use presupposes commitment to a belief, such that were this belief discovered to be false, the name could not continue to be used in the same way."

What MacIntyre concludes from this is not relativism but the difficulty of translation which even sometimes becomes impossible. As will be

discussed in my discussion of perspectivism later in this chapter, I assume MacIntyre here means that literal and word to word translation is sometimes impossible between incommensurable traditions; but translation by interpretation and glosses is, in principle in MacIntyre's view, always possible if translators pay sufficient attention to reconstruct the context of the language from which they want to translate:

> It seems clear that where we have sufficient textual and other materials from a culture which no longer exists, those with the requisite linguistic and historical skills can so immerse themselves that they can become almost, if not quite, surrogate participants in such societies as those of fifth-century Athens or twelfth century Iceland (1988a, p.374).

The view that agents can transcend their existing circumstances, and act as "surrogate participants" is a metaphysical claim about the self, which points to the fact that the self is not fundamentally tied to its context, and it can take a higher perspective to evaluate that context and understand other contexts. This metaphysical view is compatible with the metaphysics of Aquinas' theory of knowledge according to which the intellect in the knowledge-process becomes formally, and not materially, identical with the object. I will return to this issue in my discussion of perspectivism in the present chapter.

Another problem regarding Hare's view is that sharing some general evaluative words which he calls primary evaluative words like that of wrongness is not sufficient for having constructive inter-cultural communication. Communication is conducted on the bases of beliefs, statements and propositions, and not only words. We use words in our premises; so what matters in addition to the meanings of single words is the way we use the words in forming premises and the subjects of which we predicate these words. In other words, sharing the word "wrong" does not suffice for communication; in addition to this, we should share judgments regarding what we take to be wrong, and this is context-specific. By this I do not mean that we cannot find some common subjects of wrongness among human beings; I seek here to say that the sheer insistence on primary

182

evaluative words does not necessarily conduce to rational communication, because these words have a referential character which is context-dependent. Hare does not take into account MacIntyre's method for inter-traditional communication based on the notion of EC outlined above.

In another criticism, Habermas (1994, p.100) argues that MacIntyre is "entangled in precisely the relativism he tries to avoid by means of his learning theory." By learning theory, I think Habermas points to MacIntyre's theory of inter-traditional communication based on his notion of EC. Habermas offers three reasons for his claim. The first reason is that, in his view, MacIntyre's model is too selective, by which he means all the traditions and the ethical systems MacIntyre has in mind are in the discourse of Western philosophy, "so they can learn from each other without compromising their identity" (Habermas 1994, p.100). I think this charge does not apply to MacIntyre; because if we consider Aristotelian/Thomistic/Scottish traditions, on the one hand, and the Enlightenment and liberal tradition, on the other hand, we can recognize the deep differences between their worldviews, even if they are geographically located in the West. The rational superiority of Thomism over these traditions, if vindicated by MacIntyre, endangers the identity of the liberal tradition, due to their different and conflicting views of the good and the place they accord to the good.

Habermas' second reason is that MacIntyre's "metatheoretical claims about stages of increasing reflexivity" either holds true for any tradition, in which case they have not developed from within the context of a particular research tradition, or only have local validity, which means MacIntyre is subject to relativism (Habermas 1994, p.100). It is not entirely clear what Habermas means here by the stages of increasing reflexivity; I assume he means the kind of awareness that people from different traditions can gradually acquire about their own and other traditions. If it is the case, in response I say that what MacIntyre has introduced is a procedure that can apply to all traditions. As was argued earlier regarding the distinction between rationality/reasonableness, the procedure of holding one's tradition

183

to be fallible is a matter of reasonableness, and not of rationality. On this basis, I reject the first part of Habermas' claim, because this procedure does not need to develop from within traditions; rather, it applies to traditions that reasonably take into account permanent inadequacies of all human beings' minds and theories.

Habermas' third reason is that the recognition of the rational superiority of an alien tradition can be motivated "if the learning subject can compare the explanatory power of both traditions in relation to the *same* problems", which Habermas thinks is impossible, because the two traditions are incommensurable in the absence of "a zone of rational overlap" (Habermas 1994, p.101). My discussion of MacIntyre's view of incommensurability later in this chapter can serve as a response to this criticism. I will explain that in MacIntyre's view, it is possible to make attempts to change the relation between incommensurables using his theory of learning and translation, and his account of narrative thinking, which places different traditions of thought in a narrative to see which one can make the failure of the others intelligible, and so they become to some extent commensurable. MacIntyre has not denied the existence of some shared beliefs and positions among traditions either (1988a, p.350).

Another criticism made by Habermas concerns the issue of "inflexible identity" or "split personality" in MacIntyre's notion of learning an alien language as a second first language. In sum, Habermas' point runs as follows. Suppose there is a language speaker whose identity has been formed in the tradition and life-forms of his mother tongue, such that it remains unaltered by the acquisition of a second first language, as described by MacIntyre; in other words, he has an inflexible identity. In the process of learning the new language, when the two languages prove to be mutually impervious, the speaker has two alternatives: either converting to the rationally superior language, or acquiring a new identity that he cannot bring into relation with his first identity; in short, the speaker suffers a split personality (Habermas 1994, p.103).

184

This criticism concerns the relation between the new and the old requirements upon an agent in a state of EC. One possible rejoinder on behalf of MacIntyre would be that MacIntyre's CT does not oblige him to take identities as inflexible, because it allows the agent to transcend his current situation to reflect on his obligations formed in his own tradition. The agent's identity is not a solid one, and the individual can look at his current identity from a higher perspective to compare it with other identities; if the individual derives gradually some elements from an alien source, he can make his identity consistent by offering some new interpretations of his older identity and tradition, or by discarding some parts of his identity. Individuals seldom have fully consistent identities, and they might endeavour ceaselessly to render their identities consistent through time.

Another way to respond to Habermas is by appeal to MacIntyre's view that the recognition of the EC and its solution occur on the basis of the crisis-tradition's measures of rationality; we recall that one condition which MacIntyre mentioned for a successful solution of an EC is that the new tradition shows some "fundamental continuity" with the old tradition; so we can expect that the agents in this tradition do not face a split personality, due to the existence of this continuity between the old and new traditions (1988a, p.362).

The other way to reply to Habermas is based on the vulnerability approach which I will defend in the final chapter. The explanation is that if we can justify that some norms apply to human beings *qua* human beings, then the acceptance of these norms, which are necessary for normal functioning of human beings, does not split the identity of individuals, as these norms and basic goods are in fact prerequisites for any functional personality.

In another criticism, M. Colby (1995, p.55) has argued that MacIntyre's appeal to notions like "the best theory so far", "epistemological crisis", and "puzzle-solving" cannot dispel the charge of relativism. The core of Colby's argument is that according to the CT, "there can be no

external reasons or meta-standards, methodically binding on all traditions"; the judgments about the existence of a crisis, provisional superiority or inferiority of traditions, and the resolution of crises become necessarily relative "to each tradition's own unique cognitive content and claims" (Colby 1995, p.55). In his view, without a "tradition-shared criterion of adequacy" for identifying an epistemological crisis, rival traditions accuse each other of failing to acknowledge the epistemological crises they face (Colby 1995, p.56).

In Colby's view (1995, p.57), "no criteria of problem-solving and crisis-resolving effectiveness can be formulated across traditions if the CT relativises *all* standards, especially that of progressiveness"; in his view, the term "continuity" used by MacIntyre as a condition of the genuine solution of epistemological crisis is formal and open to interpretive disputes. Colby (1995, p.71) also appeals to the Duhem-Quine thesis to maintain that the claims of traditions cannot be evaluated individually; even if some claims and elements of a tradition prove to be rationally superior, it does not establish that the whole tradition is rationally superior.

In my view, Colby's attention to the context-based application of MacIntyre's key expressions such as epistemological crisis, adequacy etc., is insightful; however, I think his interpretation of the CT is excessive, as Colby takes this to mean that there are no shared measures among traditions. MacIntyre has not denied the possibility of the existence of some shared texts and beliefs among traditions, even though they are not sufficient to settle their disputes; as he puts it, "traditions which differ in the most radical way over certain subject matters may in respect of others share beliefs, images, and texts" (1988a, p.350).

Furthermore, MacIntyre has insisted that the identification of a superior tradition occurs on the basis of a tradition's own standards, and this solves the problem that Colby refers to, namely, that MacIntyre's method is not compatible with his CT, as every tradition assesses the superiority of a rival tradition by its own standards; nevertheless, as I have suggested earlier, a

full response to Colby and to the charge of relativism requires an appeal to some trans-traditional measures of rationality.

As J. Annas (1989, p.401) indicates, there is a move in MacIntyre's works from a strong thesis of CT, which she calls the "essential location" of ideas and the self, to a weaker claim which points to the necessity of "historical understanding" of ideas and theories. There is a difference between holding that ideas and theories have a history that should be understood as their context, which hints at the CT in the methodological sense, and holding that ideas and theories are essentially located in and locked into their context and are governed by exclusively internal standards. The former as distinct from the latter, does not have relativistic implications.

J. A. Herdt (1998, p.535) shows more sympathy with MacIntyre, and maintains that there "seems" to be a contradiction in MacIntyre's thought when he introduced a universally valid and tradition-independent solution to the issue of inter-traditional relationships; however, in Herdt's view, the appearance of the contradiction can be dismissed by holding that MacIntyre has appealed to standards that are universal, but not independent of traditions. In her view, MacIntyre has thus appealed to some standards that are valid in all traditions:

> It is important to note, first, that although MacIntyre insists that traditions will have different such standards, he also indicates that they will always be standards of cogency and illumination. This implies a degree of universality, however minimal, among such standards (Herdt 1998, p.535).

Herdt (1998, p.538), on such a basis, proposes a third alternative to the notions of tradition-dependence and tradition-independence, that is, the notion of tradition-transcendental. By this notion, Herdt (1998, p.538) means that MacIntyre in his discussion of different traditions "moves into thoroughly general terms, speaking of what is 'presupposed by' traditions of enquiry, and therefore of something that is, in a logical sense, situated before all such existing traditions... [these general standards of justification]

187

are available to traditions in the sense that they are already presupposed by them."

She (1998, p.534) further distinguishes between the validity of a notion and its originality in a tradition. In her view, the fact that a notion has originated from/in a tradition does not mean that the notion is only valid in that tradition. For instance, the notion of empathetic imagination used by MacIntyre to explain inter-traditional communication is a liberal concept which still is valid for other traditions, and has application for them. To justify her interpretation of MacIntyre as having invoked tradition-transcendent measures which in her view are different from tradition-independent measures, Herdt (1998, p.538) refers to the following passage from MacIntyre:

> Notice that the grounds for an answer to relativism and perspectivism are to be found, not in any theory of rationality as yet explicitly articulated and advanced within one or more of the traditions with which we have been concerned, but rather with a theory embodied in and presupposed by their practices of enquiry, yet never fully spelled out (MacIntyre 1988a, p.354).

She (1998, p.538) then concludes that MacIntyre, to dismiss the charge of relativism and perspectivism, has appealed to measures that are presupposed by all traditions of enquiry, and which therefore, in my terms, can provide valid measures for evaluating different traditions. A few points are worth mentioning about all this.

(1) Herdt (1998, p.535) has admitted that these transcendent norms are formal; in her view, the notion of empathetic imagination is a formal procedure; if that is so, how can formal measures settle substantive disputes between traditions? MacIntyre (1988a, p.350) has also pointed to some degree of logical similarities and even some substantial agreements among traditions, but he is clear that these are not sufficient for terminating disagreements among them. Accordingly, the sheer existence of these formal procedures cannot dispel the charge of relativism.

(2) My second point is with regard to MacIntyre's passage quoted above. MacIntyre in his more serious criticism of perspectivism, which will be explained below in my discussion of perspectivism, has gone beyond the approach suggested in the quote that bases a theory of rationality on grounds embodied in and practiced by all traditions; instead, MacIntyre has based his substantial criticism of relativism and perspectivism on his account of Thomism. I will discuss later how MacIntyre has used the non-nominalistic metaphysics of Aquinas to distance himself from perspectivism. This metaphysics is not shared by rival traditions. As a result, MacIntyre in his response to relativism and perspectivism does not completely move in the direction suggested by Herdt, that is, by appealing to measures of rationality that are presupposed by all traditions.

(3) I am sympathetic with Herdt's general approach which is based on measures presupposed by all traditions; however, I think these measures need to be extended to include substantial shared measures in order to dismiss the charge of relativism. MacIntyre should acknowledge that our shared beliefs are in fact rich enough to form the basis of moral agreements. I will pursue this direction in the final chapter to show how different traditions can build a shared threshold of morality.

C. S. Lutz (2004, p.67) has followed M. Krausz's (1984) distinction between relativism and relativity to defend MacIntyre against the charge of relativism. In this view, relativism means truth is relative to a conceptual framework, and relativity implies that cultural entities are to be understood in the cultural setting in which they appear; relativity in their view does not entail relativism. Lutz (2004, p.67) holds that MacIntyre has appealed to the notion of relativity, and not to relativism. He refers to MacIntyre's view that "while the rationality of judgments concerning human excellence remains relative to culture, the truth about human excellence does not" (Lutz 2004, p.67).

The distinction between relativity/relativism seems to parallel the distinction between essential location and historical understanding made by Annas discussed above. However, in my view, we should note that both

189

notions of relativism and relativity, and not only the notion of relativity, appear in MacIntyre's thought. The notion of relativity appears in MacIntyre's (1988a, p.22) emphasis on the role of narratives and traditions in making our actions intelligible. The notion of relativism comes to the fore in MacIntyre's (1988a, p.9) emphasis that there are different notions of rationality in different traditions of enquiry. The latter idea has strong relativistic overtones if MacIntyre adheres to a strong reading of it, and does not admit the existence of any shared measures of rationality.

A "relatively" good way of understanding MacIntyre's attitude to rationality and truth, and his stance toward relativism is by the distinction that is drawn by T. D. D'Andrea between the particularism of procedures and the universality of outcomes. D'Andrea is more sympathetic with MacIntyre's response to relativism, and believes that interpretations to the contrary are due to "a not entirely careful reading of things he [MacIntyre] has said" (D'Andrea 2006, p.403). In his view, the particularism of MacIntyre, which some critics like Haldane and George have pointed to as having relativistic implications, is "a particularism of procedure, not of outcome" (D'Andrea 2006, p.403). By particularism, I assume D'Andrea points to MacIntyre's CT, namely, the view that there are no universal and neutral measures of rationality. As was argued above, in MacIntyre's view, traditions, while they have their own rationalities, are not closed entities, and they can and should learn from each other. This implies the very distinction made by D'Andrea between the particularism of procedures and outcomes according to which while a tradition has its own particular procedures, its outcomes might be valid for other traditions; however, it needs to be explained why and how the particularism of procedures does not lead to particularism of outcomes. D'Andrea does not explain this distinction and its possibility adequately; a distinction which, in my view, is question-begging. In fact, the main issue of relativism concerns how particular measures and methods can result in a universalistic content. This idea is at the heart of MacIntyre's universalism and particularism regarding truth and rationality respectively.

190

The procedures and methods of enquiry act as spotlights that diffuse light on some area at the expense of leaving other areas dark. However, as the world is independent of our minds and our methods of enquiry, it will expose the inadequacies of these minds and methods from time to time. Rationality and reasonableness require of us to complement these methods by holding them corrigible even on the bases of rival resources that we can use consistently with our traditions' resources. This analysis is what MacIntyre has presented by the notion of EC (1988a, pp.361-363).

Regarding D'Andrea's distinction between procedures and outcomes, we should note that it is possible for an EC to befall procedures and methods of enquiry, in addition to the resources of traditions. Accordingly, we cannot expect a particularistic method to always take us to a conclusion that is universally valid. The realist theory of truth enjoins enquirers to hold their methods and procedures fallible, because reality is independent of these methods, and some of its aspects might prove uncaptured by these methods. In other words, the particular procedures of a given tradition do not necessarily arrive at truth, though the proponents of the tradition take the result of their enquiries as universally valid.

A question arises here regarding how to evaluate a tradition's procedures. In order to refute relativism, we should find a way in which the internal measures and procedures of traditions can be evaluated externally. It does not suffice to hold that each tradition using its own procedures will arrive at universal outcomes; we should find a way of assessing both what traditions take as universally valid, and their internal measures and procedures. This can be done to some extent by appealing to some minimal shared measures that apply to all human traditions, as will be discussed in the final chapter. Accordingly, the distinction between procedures and contents in terms of their particularism and universalism does not always hold, and we cannot in this way support MacIntyre against relativism; rather, we need some measures to assess both contents and procedures.

In this section, I discussed the critics of MacIntyre who level the charge of relativism against him in terms of the consistency between his CT

and his realist theory of truth; there is also another kind of criticism that emphasizes the incompatibility of MacIntyre's CT with his Thomism. In this literature sometimes relativism is referred to as particularism, both of which here convey that all measures of rationality and justice are defined in particular traditions.

IV.3.1.2.3 Some Criticisms of MacIntyre on the Consistency of His Particularism with Thomism

In the previous chapter, I pointed to some criticisms of MacIntyre on the incompatibility between his particularism and his appeal to Aquinas' thought which is universalistic in nature. I need to recall those arguments in more detail here as they are relevant to the issue of relativism.

I there put forth J. Coleman's criticism (1994, p.81) that Aquinas' account of knowledge is inconsistent with historicism, "a definition [for Aristotle and Aquinas] is not culture bound nor is it temporal. Both names and definitions which grasp the essence of a subject have no temporality." Based on this view, Coleman (1994, pp.81-82) concludes that MacIntyre cannot be a Thomist, because he holds that we cannot be initiated into a practice without accepting the best standards in the history of that tradition; a view that "places definition in the hands of cultures with conventional codes of self-expression"; while definitions for Aristotle and Aquinas are universal and timeless.

I also explained R. P. George's view (1989, p.593) that MacIntyre's particularism regarding practical rationality and justice is not compatible with Thomism and Aquinas' thought, because in Aquinas' view there are some evident truths accessible to all competent human beings despite their different heritages. George (1989, p.593), furthermore, argues that MacIntyre's final assertion that he is after a true account of justice and rationality, which is a Thomistic account, is at odds with his initial emphasis that there are different versions of these notions based on different traditions, and that these notions are not comparable neutrally. He (1989, pp.601-602) then advises MacIntyre to weaken his moral particularism to remedy this inconsistency, and finally admits that MacIntyre has made a

192

powerful case against the strong form of relativism by appealing to the notion of EC, but that this does not serve to respond to a weaker form of relativism which, however, is not defined by George. By the strong form of relativism, George (1989, p.602) has in mind a relativism that holds all traditions will necessarily be vindicated on their own terms; a view which MacIntyre rejects. In response to this line of criticism, I there argued that if MacIntyre did not admit any sort of universality regarding human beings' nature and practical rationality, he could not make his CT consistent with Thomism, because, otherwise, his CT would be relativistic which is incompatible with Thomism. But as his CT, in part, means a gradualist approach from particulars to universals, he is immune to this charge.

It is true that for Aristotle and Aquinas real definitions include essential features of things, which are culture-independent; however, this universalism is compatible with a gradualist approach according to which we do not have access to perfect knowledge at the beginning of our enquiries, and that we should dialectically approximate to that perfect knowledge; as MacIntyre holds in line with his weak interpretation of the veracity of the intellect explained in chapter 3:

> Both Aristotle and Aquinas recognize a distinction between those timeless truths about natural kinds, essential properties and the teleological ordering of things and persons in terms of which all true and justified explanation and understanding has to be framed and *the varyingly adequate attempts* to formulate those truths which marked the history of enquiry (1994b, p.300). [Italics added]

The passage above indicates that particularism for MacIntyre, which is associated with his CT in the methodological sense and might have some relativistic implications, means a gradual and dialectical progress toward universally valid definitions and notions. Different theories facing EC can check the relative adequacy of each other, and investigate how they can obtain accounts of things that are closer to how they are in reality.

The kind of charge that takes Aquinas' thought as incompatible with particularism does not take into account the distinction in Aquinas' work

193

(*ST*, I, Q.2, Art.1) between two senses of self-evidence. As was explained in the previous chapter, for Aquinas, any first principle is self-evident in two senses; it is self-evident in itself if the predicate is included in the subject, whether we know this or not. The same first principle might or might not be self-evident in "relation to us" depending on whether we know sufficiently the subject/predicate to admit the fact that the predicate is present in the subject. For instance, the existence of God is *per se* self-evident, but it may not be evident to us. The self-evidence of the latter kind of principles needs some kind of development on our part through argumentation. This view supports a gradualist and dialectical interpretation of Aquinas's theory of knowledge; accordingly, the kind of universalism ascribed to Aquinas by George is dubious.

I argued in the previous chapter that despite Aquinas' epistemic optimism, there remains room for errors and dialectical corrections in the knowledge-process; in fact, we often should use nominal definitions which are based on accidentals, instead of real definitions which are based on our knowledge of essences.

In Aquinas' view, perfect knowledge is possessed by angels, who do not need "to advance from one thing to another; but apprehend the truth simply and without mental discussion ..." (*ST*, I, Q.79, Art.8); accordingly, a kind of gradualism is seen in Aquinas' theory of knowledge, despite his partial optimism and theological convictions which might give him some sense of epistemic absolutism. This interpretation would propel MacIntyre's CT in its methodological sense in the direction of a dialectical and gradualist understanding in both theoretical and practical issues, which is immune to the charge of relativism; but it needs to be improved by explicitly accepting the existence of some shared substantial measures of rationality.

M. Kuna (2005, pp.268-269), as opposed to the charges mentioned above, argues, in line with my responses, that MacIntyre's moral particularism is consistent with Thomism's universalistic truth-claims. His main argument to this effect is based on MacIntyre's Thomistic view of first

194

principles as sketched above, according to which there are two kinds of first principles: (1) epistemological which are accessible to all, and (2) substantial which are accessible to those in a particular field. In MacIntyre's view, discussed earlier, we start from substantial first principles without knowing their justification; we use dialectics to reach the point where we can claim necessary truths about these substantial principles some of which might be universally valid. Kuna (2005, p.271), based on this view, concludes that "the particularity of our standpoint does not imply that we cannot arrive, *via* dialectical argument, at conclusions which are necessarily and universally true." He takes this position as being related to MacIntyre's metaphysical and teleological approach to truth the absence of which has rendered contemporary anti-metaphysical philosophies unintelligible. Kuna's point, in sum, here is that we start from particularistic starting-points, but that is possible for them later to turn into universally valid claims.

IV.3.1.2.4 A Final Evaluation of MacIntyre's Distinction from Relativism

My evaluation of MacIntyre's arguments against relativism and the criticisms argued above in this section is that some parts of MacIntyre's works, in particular chapters 1 and 18–20 in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, tend to prevent MacIntyre from getting around the charge of relativism. In these chapters, MacIntyre emphasizes the internality of rationality to social orders and traditions. MacIntyre succeeds in outlining the communicative relation between traditions; but as he insists that this communication and the removal of EC are judged on the basis of traditions' internal measures of rationality he falls back into the trap of relativism. This is despite his intentions, and is incompatible with the tenor of his thought including his Aristotelianism and Thomism.

To remove this inadequacy, in my view, the best option for him would be to revise these parts of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* along the lines of his earlier book *After Virtue*. To explain, MacIntyre contended in *After Virtue* that "the Aristotelian tradition can be restated in a way that

restores intelligibility and rationality to our moral and social attitudes and commitments" (1981, p.259). This indicates that for MacIntyre the Aristotelian tradition provides a rationality that is more adequate and superior to the rationality of the liberal tradition, as was explained in chapter 1; however, it would be a mistake to expect the liberal tradition to acknowledge this superiority according to its own standards of rationality, because there are in some respects fundamental disagreements between the two, for instance, with regard to the place of the good in the public sphere. The liberal state is based on the ideal of neutrality between different goods, in so far as they do not threaten public order; while the Aristotelian *polis* is expected to honour the virtues and the good life (1990b, p.346). Therefore, while MacIntyre (1995, p.xxix) maintains that rationalities are related to and, indeed, are aspects of practices and of lives in traditions, he does not mean by this that the rationalities of different traditions are equally good and adequate such that it is not possible to judge one particular tradition embodying a more adequate account of rationality than that of others.

In chapter 1, I distinguished moral traditions from MacIntyre's perspective into the two groups of traditions in a general and an ideal sense. I explained ideal traditions from MacIntyre's perspective as those traditions that are progressive and rest on widespread agreements about the virtues and the good. The social structures in this ideal sense support a life that honours and promotes the virtues and the good; as MacIntyre puts the point, "[Aristotle and Aquinas] argued that it was only within a particular type of political and social order that rationally adequate practical and moral concepts could be socially embodied" (2006d, p.111).

This passage clearly stands contrary to relativism of any sort. A question might arise here regarding what MacIntyre means by the notion of rationality that is provided in some traditions and social orders better than in others. In chapter 1, I claimed that the ideal rationality for MacIntyre in ethics is the ideal of objectivity as against the notion of subjectivity, and a narrative account of the intelligibility of actions. This objectivity is provided best, in MacIntyre's view, in Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions, and

basically, to some degree, in any tradition that possesses shared accounts of a human being's nature and its good. These shared grounds confer objectivity to moral judgments, which is denied to moral judgments in an emotivistic culture, as was discussed in chapter 1 (1981, p.52).[34] The ideal intelligibility also depends on having the notion of a final good or final end in order for agents to be able to make their moral actions intelligible to themselves and to others in the course of a narrative unity and a single life (1981, p.217).

In MacIntyre's account, "moral agency thus does seem to require a particular kind of social setting" (1999b, p.317). The appropriate social setting is one in which the moral agency of agents as individuals is not reduced to fulfilling the requirements of their social roles; rather, they as human beings have moral responsibilities based on the notion of the common good. This view is required by the natural law tradition according to which all human beings should acknowledge the morality of the precepts of the natural law, and any social order that educates its inhabitants to ignore them is flawed.

The preceding remarks suffice to show that MacIntyre's view of tradition and rationality is a normative one which sidēs with Aristotelianism and Thomism. In light of this, he needs to revise his emphasis that a crisis-tradition by its own standards of rationality admits the rational superiority of a rival tradition. He should explicitly allow that a tradition might indeed come to know that its standards of rationality are defective; in other words, the scope of the EC should be extended in order to possibly reach the very standards of rationality in a crisis-tradition. Insisting that an EC is admitted and overcome by internal measures of a tradition leaves MacIntyre caught up in relativism.

In fairness to MacIntyre, he acknowledges the possibility of putting the internal standards of practices into question:

---

[34] I, however, will argue in chapter 6 that these notions of objectivity and intelligibility are not required for the rationality and intelligibility of actions, and so MacIntyre's claim about the superiority of Aristotelianism and Thomism on these grounds would lapse.

> Practices of course, as I have just noticed, have a history:
> games, sciences and arts all have histories. Thus the
> standards are not themselves immune from criticism, but
> nonetheless we cannot be initiated into a practice without
> accepting the authority of the best standards realized so far
> (1981, p.190).

However, he needs to place more emphasis on the possibility and, in fact, necessity of evaluating standards in his arguments about inter-traditional communication and exchange. By doing so, he would strengthen his case against the charge of relativism. The fact that we can question the internal standards of practices requires the existence of some foundational norms that are valid independent of different conceptual schemes. Without these norms we cannot avoid relativism, even if traditions improve their own internal measures. These foundational norms might be formal or substantial. Formal norms include the norms of consistency and productivity of theories and conceptual schemes.

MacIntyre (1988a, p.351) indicates the formal rules of logic are necessary but not sufficient conditions of rationality. They can serve as minimal conditions which all conceptual schemes should observe. Over and above this, I am arguing that we need also to have some substantial foundational norms independent of all conceptual schemes in order to refute relativism more substantially than we do based on purely formal norms. By substantiality here I mean the norms or statements that are not valid as a matter of analyticity, but by referring to some facts about the world including human nature. The truth and necessity of the law of non-contradiction or that of basic mathematical rules are by definition, not referring to the world. But the proposition that human beings have rights which should be satisfied in different cultures is a substantial claim.

These shared substantial norms derive their position from objective facts about human nature, which are the same across cultures. As J. Annas (2005, p.17) indicates, from an Aristotelian perspective, human nature constrains our rationality and our ability to choose different ways of life. In her view, human nature is not plastic and able to take any shape people

wish; for instance, it would be difficult for a human being to live under social conditions that deprive him of his basic rights which are necessary for his normal and appropriate functioning.

Indeed, MacIntyre appeals to some substantial foundational values as the precepts of the natural law tradition. The primary precepts of the natural law, for instance, the wrongness of theft, enjoin some norms upon all human beings irrespective of their existing social orders (1988a, p.180-184). In fact, MacIntyre's view that some social settings threaten moral agency implies that he has substantial convictions about the human good in Aristotelian and Thomistic senses. By making these convictions more explicit, he can reject the charge of relativism. The main point is that though different traditions and practices have different rationalities, some traditions can yield better accounts of rationality in terms of objectivity and intelligibility.

In chapter 2, I argued that Nussbaum has misinterpreted MacIntyre's virtue-ethics as being relativistic. Here I again refer to Nussbaum, where she states "there is a striking divergence between Aristotle and contemporary virtue theory", on the grounds that for the latter, including MacIntyre's virtue-theory, "the return to the virtues is connected with a turn towards relativism" (Nussbaum 1988, p.33). As opposed to this interpretation, I think that in much the same way as Aristotle uses his ethical essentialism and his view regarding facts about human nature to criticize existing social settings (Annas 2005, p.17), MacIntyre also employs his account of the virtues as a critical and corrective tool for the current modern social orders. In chapter 2, I explained MacIntyre's revolutionary account which is not compatible with moral or cognitive relativism. A revolutionary has an ideal model in terms of which he assesses existing states of affairs.

MacIntyre, therefore, should explain his particularism in such a way that it does not have relativistic connotations; as he explains his particularism:

> Without those moral particularities to begin from there
> would never be anywhere to begin; but it is in moving
> forward from such particularity that the search for the good,

199

for the universal, consists. Yet particularity can never be simply left behind or obliterated. The notion of escaping from it into a realm of entirely universal maxims which belong to man as such, whether in its eighteenth-century Kantian form or in the presentation of some modern analytical moral philosophies, is an illusion and an illusion with painful consequences (1981, p.221)

To think that it is not possible to escape moral particularism, an idea which is clear in the above passage from MacIntyre, runs contrary to his natural law tradition. MacIntyre (1988a, pp.180-184) holds that, in a Thomistic view, the primary precepts of the natural law such as the wrongness of theft are true for all human beings. This shows that there are at least some universal moral principles. However, one way to make sense of MacIntyre's claim regarding the unavoidability of particularism is by paying attention to his Aristotelian and Thomistic notion of *phronesis* as a judgmental capacity that is not rule-governed and is acquired by practical education. This practical judgment targets the most relevant goods which are at stake in each particular situation, the knowledge of which is not captured by universal moral rules. Accordingly, although the precepts of the natural law are universal, and in fact, are presuppositions of theoretical and practical enquiries, they might be qualified if the good that is at stake in a situation requires it, and this again gives a particularistic aspect to MacIntyre's moral theory, because the knowledge of these processes is not rule-governed, as was explained in chapter two regarding MacIntyre's virtue-ethics. Nevertheless, we should note that this particularism does not entail relativism, and MacIntyre should clarify this, because the breach of the primary precepts of the natural law, for instance, saving a life by telling a lie, tracks the good of saving an innocent life, and so follows a logic that is trans-culturally valid, though there remain many occasions on which we cannot reach agreement. Having and following a logic means that the adequacy of this logic can be assessed by rational arguments between different peoples and traditions; an idea which runs counter to relativism. The logic that backs particularistic judgments turns the judgment in some cases to a universal claim; for instance, the fact that saving an innocent life

200

outweighs telling a lie can be justified due to the importance of a human being's life, and this judgment would not depend on a particular culture. Therefore, we see that the particularism that MacIntyre favours is not a particularism entangled in a given tradition, which results in relativism or a non-ruled and arbitrary particularism. Particularistic judgments, if they follow some goods that can be universally argued for, are open to rational assessment which might lead to some inter-traditional and universal agreements. In sum, this notion of rule-based particularism should be made distinct from relativism.

Regarding George's point mentioned above that MacIntyre should weaken his notion of CT, I would say that this notion is already a thin one; otherwise, it would be incompatible with MacIntyre's advocacy of Aristotelianism and Thomism. For MacIntyre cultural differences that point to particularism are not the last word (1994a, p.46), which means it is possible to tackle the kind of cultural and moral pluralism we encounter.

If we interpret MacIntyre's notion of CT as a gradualist move from particular positions toward more universal ones, or as a rule-based particularism outlined above, it will not conflict with Aristotle's and Aquinas' thought, as it will not have relativistic connotations. We should, however, bear in mind that this gradual move and its assessment require the acceptance of some shared measures of rationality which are not restricted to a single tradition. MacIntyre, as will be explained in the next chapter, believes that the Thomistic tradition has proved more adequate than the other traditions he has investigated. This position is not compatible with interpreting MacIntyre as advocating historicism in the sense of there being different incommensurable norms and measures of rationality in different periods and traditions.

To sum up this section, MacIntyre's moral theory is immune to moral relativism, as he favours a way of life that honours the virtues and the good. However, he needs to revise some parts of his *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* along the lines of his earlier book *After Virtue* to make this point clearer. With regard to cognitive relativism, MacIntyre's intention and

the tenor of his thought are anti-relativistic, as he has proposed a method for determining the rational superiority of a tradition over others based on the idea of EC. Two problems arise here for MacIntyre against his intention. The first is the rhetoric of his constitution thesis that borders misleadingly on relativism. This problem can be solved along the lines I proposed in chapter 2, i.e. by changing its terminology to tradition-guided and directed rationality, or the like. The term constitution is too much demanding for MacIntyre's purposes. Beyond this terminological issue, he should 1) explicitly acknowledge the universal validity of some norms, which is, indeed, required by his espousal of the natural law tradition; 2) clarify if what he means by CT is nothing more than a gradualist move toward universal positions, or a rule-based particularism the logic of which, in at least some cases, can be subject of inter-traditional agreement.

The second problem is the way he articulates his method for acknowledging the rational superiority of a rival tradition. His method is based on internal standards, and thus approaches internalism which should be avoided in order to defeat relativism. To solve this problem, I suggested there should be some substantial universal measures for all reasonable human traditions, in light of which inter-traditional exchanges can occur.

After discussing the charge of relativism against MacIntyre, I will consider in the next section his case against perspectivism; a topic which is closely related to the issue of relativism. This discussion is necessary as it might be implied by MacIntyre's CT.

IV.3.2 The Distinction from Perspectivism

There is a subtle difference between relativism and perspectivism. The former denies the idea of truth as a kind of knowledge that corresponds with reality; the latter accepts the possibility of correspondence with reality, but holds that any correspondence occurs from a particular perspective, such that the results obtained from different perspectives are incommensurable. MacIntyre thinks that his CT and theory of truth is also different from perspectivism, as he thinks truth means we can know the object as it is independent of the partialities of any particular perspective. Truths obtains

202

when the mind is adequate to the object; i.e. when it is known in its wholeness and not as limited perspectives disclose it. As MacIntyre opposes perspectivism, this shows that his CT is not a thick notion that limits enquirers to their traditions or perspectives; rather, traditions, when they have developed to become traditions of enquiry, encourage people of different traditions to engage in discursive reasoning as a way to extend their own perspective and approach truth. MacIntyre's references to some virtues such as the virtue of objectivity, the virtues of enquiry, and justice in conversation all point to the moral necessity of leaving aside our partial points of view by learning from others (1999c, p.7). In line with this, MacIntyre holds that the Enlightenment's idea of thinking for oneself should be distinguished from the idea of thinking by oneself. Reasoning for oneself would be achieved when the individual is not thinking by himself; by thinking with others, the reasoning of any particular person would be rescued from "the vagaries of passion and interest" (1987a, p.24). However, this moral outlook against perspectivism requires some metaphysical and ontological explanation regarding its possibility.

MacIntyre's Thomism does not let him think that the individual is limited to his tradition, as the intellect for Aquinas is an abstract entity which is not tied to its existing set of knowledge. As was explained in the preceding chapter, in Aquinas' view, the intellect receives the form of the object; but by this reception the intellect does not become the same as the material object of knowledge. Aquinas, in the wake of Aristotle's view in *De Anima*, explains the immateriality of the knowledge-process as follows.

> Wherefore it is clear that knowledge is in inverse ratio of materiality. And consequently things that are not receptive of forms save materially, have no power of knowledge whatever–such as plants, as the Philosopher says (*De Anima* ii, 12). But the more immaterially a thing receives the form of the thing known, the more perfect is its knowledge (*ST.* I. Q.84. Art.2).[35]

---

[35] For a full discussion of the immateriality of knowledge in Aquinas's view see: S. M. Cohen (1982).

In Aquinas' view (*ST*, I. Q.85 Art.1), truth consists in the conformity of the intellect and object; in this process the intellect receives the form of the object, and becomes identical with the thing formally not materially. MacIntyre points to this Thomistic line of reasoning in his criticism of perspectivism, for instance, when he writes "a mind thinking about a jug is not a jug" (2006h, p.201).[36]

We can, given MacIntyre's espousal of Thomism, use Aquinas' notion of the immateriality of the process of knowledge to provide a metaphysical foundation for the claim that the individual is not tied and limited to its own perspective, since the soul/intellect is immaterial and capable of getting over its current perspective. In this view, the intellect remains an abstract entity, though it is embodied in a particular individual and social setting.

When the truth is obtained, the intellect reaches the status of co-formality with the object, in the sense that both the intellect and the object share the same form; however, the intellect as an abstract and active entity retains its cognitive superiority, which means it is capable of disentangling itself from its current perspective to look at the object from other viewpoints. The intellect, due to its immateriality, retains its transcendental stance, and can go beyond its particular perspective and if necessary use rival resources to resolve an EC; as Aquinas puts it:

> For although the human soul is a form united to the body, it is not embraced completely by the body as though immersed in it as other material forms are, but *transcends the capacity of the whole of corporeal matter* ... still the soul has an intellectual nature in virtue of that part whereby *it transcends the capacity of the body" (Quaestiones Diaputatae De Anima* II). [Italics added]

Aquinas' emphasis on the capacity of the soul to transcend the body, and that the forms received by it are not material can be very useful in understanding how the mind can go beyond a particular perspective, and

---

[36]It should be noted that MacIntyre's use of this reasoning is in the context of his argument for realism which, in his view, runs counter to perspectivism, as will be explained later in this chapter; however, I think we can use the same line of reasoning in this context about the immateriality of the intellect.

how it can be partially released to discard or revise its current commitments. These remarks indicate that MacIntyre in line with his Thomism cannot adhere to a strong interpretation of his CT.

Besides the point above regarding the immateriality of the intellect, another feature of Aquinas' and MacIntyre's thought, i.e. ontological realism, is used by the latter against perspectivism. The impact of Aquinas on MacIntyre is very clear on this issue. According to Aquinas' realist ontology, the order of things and their features are independent of our apprehensions of them. The substantial features that we ascribe to things, if they are true, are theirs due to their inherent essences; while, for instance, according to nominalist pragmatism these features are the products of human beings' minds, developed according to the practical use the things have for us.

In W. James' pragmatic account, for instance, language has a basic role in conceptualization. This view puts James in the nominalist group. As James puts it "experience merely as such does not come ticketed and labelled"; individuals mark regularity in their own experience with the help of language, but this does not mean that the regularity so experienced exists in reality (James 1907, lecture V; R. S. Prawat 2003, pp.284-285).

In Aquinas' and MacIntyre's view (2006g, p.190), by contrast to this pragmatic account, we can only properly apprehend things and classify them as a result of their own features by which they impact causally on us. In Aquinas' account, MacIntyre (2006g, p.190) holds, things exist prior to and independently of our understanding of them; they are potentially objects of our perception; but they are already "actually whatever they must be in order to be perceptible and intelligible". According to this non-nominalistic view of MacIntyre, we do not make things intelligible by categorizing and conceptualizing them; rather, they are intelligible *per se*, and we can categorize them truly, because they have the properties that make them apt for getting categorized in a particular way. Our true knowledge is acquired through a causal relation between the object and the intellect; the object as it is affects the intellect:

205

A mind thinking about a jug is not a jug. And that this is so is crucial to a second aspect of true judgment. When we take our assertions to be true, when we take it that their content is identical with how things are, we also take it that this is because our thoughts in the assertive mode have been made what they are by that same reality about which we are thinking. We presuppose, that is, that some causal relationship holds between our mind and the realities external to it about which we judge and that our thoughts are in this particular case determined to be what they are by those realities being as they are (2006h, p.201).

We sometimes categorize things in our minds wrongly, due to our false categories and conceptual schemes which should be revised. By revising these categories and conceptual schemes, we move toward more adequate categories, and realize that the objects known thorough the new categories are the very realities apprehended earlier by less adequate categories, and that their existence and features are independent of our categories (2006g, p.190).

In MacIntyre's view (2006g, p.190), that the orders of things are independent of our choices, desires and will, and that these orders give meaning and significance to our choices and projects are at odds with contemporary pragmatism and nominalism. According to pragmatism, the orders of things and the categories which we use to structure our experiences are based on the kind of use that the things have for us. According to nominalism, the orders of things are defined and constructed by human beings' minds. MacIntyre (2006g, p.191) holds, pragmatism and nominalism complement each other, and support the idea that intelligibility is a "mental artefact" assigned to the things by the mind within particular perspectives. This view, MacIntyre (2006g, p.190) maintains, is not compatible with the realism of Aquinas.

MacIntyre's view that objects are intelligible in the light of their own features and not in the light of our perspectives indicates how different his view is from the linguistic interpretation which was explained at the beginning of the chapter. The role of language for MacIntyre is not to render things intelligible; rather, it is to let us communicate on the basis of our

understandings of independent realities. If the world and its regularities are independent of our minds and perspectives, then this can pose a challenge to perspectivism, because the independent world is apt to reveal itself against partial perspectives, and to disclose their limits. In other worlds, the world itself moves against perspectivism, because it is independent of our perspectives, and tends to disclose their limitations, and so it is not the case that what every perspective presents is true. The world, in other words, is not indifferent regarding existing perspectives.

As my concern here is mainly with MacIntyre as a moral philosopher, I should also address the issue of perspectivism in the moral arena. Perspectivism in morality indicates that moral norms are incommensurably different from one perspective to another. However, in line with the realism outlined above, I would argue that if we hold that human nature, at least to some degree, remains the same across traditions, such that it requires some norms for its normal functioning, this would set some limits upon perspectivism in morality; because, we have at least some norms by means of which we can compare different moral perspectives, as will be discussed further in the final chapter.

MacIntyre's stance against perspectivism indicates that, in his view, we can tackle the issue of the incommensurability of different perspectives; otherwise, the charge of perspectivism persists; therefore, as a part of this discussion I should address MacIntyre's account of incommensurability.

IV.3.2.1 MacIntyre's Account of Incommensurability

In this section, I refer to three related aspects of MacIntyre's response to incommensurability, and attempt to explain and evaluate his response. The first aspect of MacIntyre's response addresses value-incommensurability by appealing to a unifying notion of the good. This concept of the good, prevailing over other subordinate and incommensurable goods, provides a shared measure for their evaluation. This view of the good is related to MacIntyre's interpretation of Aristotelian ethics according to which there is a unifying conception of the good and the virtues that applies to human beings as the members of a species; while

207

from the standpoint of modernity there is no uniquely rational way of ordering goods within the scheme of life (1981, p.184; 1988a, p.133). On such a basis, MacIntyre maintains (1988a, p.142) that Aristotle subordinates moral and political virtues to the contemplative activity of citizens, and this can dissolve moral tragedies.

The second aspect invokes using a third tradition or theory that is more comprehensive than two incommensurable theories or traditions, which can compare their merits and demerits. When the state of incommensurability holds between two theories, it is possible for a third theory to emerge, combining the two incommensurable theories, modifying their claims, tailoring them into a more comprehensive theory, that is, by collecting and improving their strengths. This is what happened, in MacIntyre's view, in Thomism's amalgamation of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism. This third theory, as is the case in the relation between Aristotelianism and Thomism, on the one hand, and Liberalism, on the other, might be able to show the defects of what is thought to be incommensurable with it, and what has rendered them incommensurable (1990a, p.146). A more resourceful theory or tradition provides a narrative to explain the merits and defects of its rival, making it at least partly commensurable.

The third aspect of MacIntyre's response to incommensurability, which is also related to the second aspect mentioned above, involves a textual understanding and translation along with interpretations and glosses. This means that when two traditions which seem to be incommensurable face each other and do not have sufficient linguistic background to translate the claims of each other, they can adopt a translation method other than a sentence-to-sentence and literal translation. They can interpret each other's claims along with explanations and glosses in order to understand them as are understood in the rival's own context; and this is what MacIntyre means by learning a language as a second first language; that is, a contextual learning (1988a, p.374).

By learning an alien language as a second first language, we can understand the context in which the language finds its meaning, and then we

208

can understand which parts of the language are not translatable into our language; but this recognition of untranslatability and inaccessibility requires that we have understood those claims in the tradition's own terms. We have acquired a bilingual capacity to understand the claims in their context and in the tradition's own terms.

The results of translation from an alien language might be incompatible with the destination language's belief-system, but they need not be incommensurable; as MacIntyre (1985, p.11) puts it, "commensurability and incompatibility are not incompatible." This means that two theories or propositions might be incompatible, but incompatibility assumes their comparability and translatability into a third or into each other's language. If we could not compare two incompatible theories we cannot in the first place identify their incompatibility.

MacIntyre (1988a, p.370) thinks appeals to linguistic innovation, explanations and glosses can furnish a tradition with new concepts and theories which are necessary to understanding an incommensurable theory, to rendering it commensurable, which allows people to compare the merits and demerits of the theories and their relation to each other.

Epistemological crises are occasions on which rival traditions that embody incommensurable foundations and values can approach each other. This requires a contextual understanding of each other's claims in order to compare their merits and demerits. As MacIntyre in his comparison of modern morality and Aristotelian/Thomistic morality has done, it is possible to provide a narrative to compare *prima facie* incommensurable notions. This narrative explains the relation between these notions and what has made them incommensurable. For instance, according to MacIntyre, the absence of the notion of the human good in modern morality has led to the emergence of a new and fragmented moral scheme.

In MacIntyre's view (1988a, p.370), if different traditions take each other as incompatible and rival, it shows that they can understand each other to some significant degree. This understanding and representation of a rival view sometimes relies on historical transformations on the part of both

209

rivals, and on conceptual and linguistic innovations. These traditions sometimes need to enrich their own stocks of vocabulary and concepts to be able to render rival claims understandable and comparable. However, we should note that this comparison between rival theories is conducted from a tradition's perspective, and so its results might not be accepted by others.

M. Krausz (2007, p.67) rightly ascribes the view to MacIntyre that "languages not fully translatable between one another need be no barrier to one's understanding them." If we do not have sufficient conceptual parallels for translating an alien language into our own, this does not necessarily pose an impassable barrier between us. Untranslatability might temporarily lead into incommensurability; however as J. Stout (1988, pp.64-65) holds, cultures are not hermeneutically sealed, and they can undertake conceptual and linguistic innovations to understand each other. Stout here approaches MacIntyre's view mentioned above that we can take initial steps toward rendering incommensurable traditions commensurable by acquiring the rival language in its own context and as a second first language (1991b, p.111).

In this section, I discussed MacIntyre's notion of incommensurability in connection with his view that his CT is distinct from perspectivism. A corollary of this is that he should not believe in a strong form of incommensurability between theories developed within different perspectives; otherwise, he could not defend his theory against the charge of perspectivism.

MacIntyre, thus, intends to tackle incommensurability between traditions in part by forming a narrative that can compare their strong and weak points; however, clearly this process is not immune to the partiality of this narration. For example, MacIntyre's commitment to Thomism informs his judgment that this tradition can form a wider context for comparing Aristotelianism and Augustinianism, or that Thomism can explain the inadequacy of Liberalism. This partiality, however, might result in a comparison that is denied by other sides, as they do not share this underlying commitment.

To solve this problem in the realm of morality, I assume, we should appeal to some basic human goods which no reasonable theory or tradition can reject. MacIntyre's appeal to the notion of the final human good to solve value-incommensurability does not work either in conditions of moral pluralism, as there are rival incommensurable accounts of the good. Nevertheless, we can try to achieve agreement in the context of human basic needs which can serve as the basis of morality, as will be discussed in the final chapter.

IV.4 Conclusion

This chapter intended to provide an account of MacIntyre's theory of truth which is a Thomistic correspondence theory of truth. This version of a correspondence theory of truth is based on the notion of adequacy of the intellect for its objects, according to which a theory counts as true if it can withstand all existing challenges. Throughout the chapter, I investigated the compatibility of MacIntyre's theory of truth with his CT. In line with this, his theory was compared with perspectivism and relativism, which bear some similarities with his CT. With regard to relativism, I argued that MacIntyre believes a tradition might be refuted according to its own standards; a position which MacIntyre takes to be contrary to relativism. However, I argued that in so far as MacIntyre insists on the identification and the assessment of epistemological crises based on the internal measures of traditions, he cannot fundamentally dismiss the charge of relativism, as this internal assessment is the main point of relativism.

To solve this problem, I argued that we should interpret MacIntyre's later account of rationality in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* along the lines he offered in his earlier book *After Virtue* in which he declared that Aristotelianism is the tradition that can restore rationality and intelligibility to Western philosophical traditions. This means that although he points to the tradition-bound nature of rationality, he does not mean that the rationality of all traditions is equally good. By this substantial advocacy of Aristotelianism and Thomism, MacIntyre can reject the charge of relativism against his CT, as it proves inclined toward a way of life and enquiry that

211

honours the virtues and the good. Accordingly, while MacIntyre's intention and his tenor of thought are anti-relativistic, his method based on EC due to its internalism cannot adequately justify his position against relativism. To revise this method, I argued we need to hold on to universal measures that are and should be valid across traditions, which can be used to evaluate these traditions.

I also held that MacIntyre should clarify whether what he means by his constitution thesis is nothing more than a gradualist and rule-based particularism, and not that traditions possess incommensurable measures of rationality, though rule-based particularism itself requires some norms that can be agreed upon inter-traditionally.

With regard to perspectivism, I argued that the inhabitants of particular perspectives are capable of understanding the beliefs and the concepts of other perspectives, particularly when they face EC, even though they cannot always use them in their own perspectives. I then discussed MacIntyre's account of incommensurability to show how in his view it is possible to make initial attempts to make incommensurable theories commensurable. One way of doing this was to have a notion of the good which can rank order our incommensurable values. Also I referred to MacIntyre's notion of translation that is accompanied with explanations and interpretations based on a contextual understanding of incommensurable notions. In addition, a theory which is more adequate than others can develop a narrative to show the strengths and weaknesses of incommensurable theories. Nevertheless, I claimed that beyond some specific norms which can be shown to be necessary for all human beings, it might not be possible to solve value-incommensurability.

I also argued that MacIntyre has employed the Aristotelian and Thomistic idea of the immateriality of the intellect to support the capacity of individuals to transcend their existing perspectives. The non-nominalistic ontology of MacIntyre is also at work in his idea that the world is apt to reveal itself independently of our categories. This realism is incompatible

with the linguistic interpretation of MacIntyre according to which we cannot get out of the language in use to grasp reality.

In sum, MacIntyre's theory of truth suggests that agents are not essentially located in their traditions. Traditions provide starting-points and directions for their inhabitants, but they do not, in principle, restrict the cognitive capacities of those who grow up in them. As his theory of truth is a realist one, and as MacIntyre insists on the possibility and necessity of knowing how things are in reality independent of different perspectives, his notion of CT should be understood as different from the way the role of language was understood by philosophy after the linguistic turn. The CT for MacIntyre, as Annas (1989, p.401) points out, eventually would mean contextual understating of theories and ideas, and not that there are different intractably incommensurable norms of rationality which lead into relativism and perspectivism. As MacIntyre himself (1988a, p.10) puts it, "From the standpoint of traditions of rational enquiry the problem of diversity is not abolished, but it is transformed in a way that renders it amenable of solution." This points to MacIntyre's account of attempting to make incommensurables commensurable, as explained above.

MacIntyre thinks that Aristotelianism and Thomism are superior to their rivals, and that the rivals are rationally required to admit this superiority, indeed, upon their own standards.[37] Two points arise here. The first is that even if MacIntyre is right in this claim, this kind of acknowledging the superiority of an alien tradition does not refute relativism, because it is based on the internal measures of traditions; something which relativism would welcome. The second point is that MacIntyre's view regarding the superiority of Aristotelianism and Thomism, despite his claim that the rivals should come to admit this internally, stems from some meta-ethical positions which are the objectivity of the good and the narrative account of the intelligibility of actions. These

---

[37]MacIntyre is, in fact, equivocal here, because according to his EC these crises should be known according to the tradition's own measures of rationality; while he also holds that the partiality of a standpoint cannot simply be discarded in this process (1993, p.17).

213

two positions underlie MacIntyre's claim about the superiority of these two traditions. In chapters 5 and 6, I will explain further this claim and discuss whether these meta-ethical positions are necessary for all accounts of morality.

In the next chapter, I will explain why MacIntyre thinks his notion of adequacy applies to the Thomistic tradition. To anticipate the discussion in the next chapter, I would say that it is not possible to expect rival traditions to acknowledge the rational superiority of Thomism based on their own standards of rationality. In fact, MacIntyre's method of EC in which he insisted that traditions might come to admit the superiority of their rivals by their own standards does not hold true here. In my view, MacIntyre, due to the meta-ethical positions sketched above, presupposes the superiority of Thomism rather than legitimately concluding it from within these rival traditions.

V- Chapter 5: the Rational Superiority of Thomism Based on MacIntyre's Dialectical Approach

V.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained how MacIntyre thinks his CT is distinct from relativism and perspectivism. One major tenet of MacIntyre's thought was that traditions might be defeated by their own measures of rationality, and that a tradition might acknowledge the rational superiority of its rivals based on its own standards; accordingly, MacIntyre thinks this method dismisses the charge of relativism.

In the present chapter, I seek to show the practical implication of the discussions in the previous chapter; i.e. to investigate why MacIntyre thinks Thomism is more adequate a tradition to withstand ECs than other traditions in the western world, and whether these traditions are obliged to admit Thomism's superiority based on their own standards.

There are two strands to MacIntyre's discussion here. The first involves establishing the rational superiority of Thomism over the traditions, i.e. Aristotelianism and Augustinianism, that do not have fundamental differences with regard to their accounts of first principles and enquiry. In this case, the rationally superior tradition would be the one that can integrate the others, and is more comprehensive, and can increase their consistency and explanatory capacity.

The second strand concerns rational debate between large systems that lack significant common grounds. In this case, rational superiority lies in the ability of the superior tradition to explain the defects of the opposing views in terms of their own standards, and to explain why they are experiencing such irresolvable problems, and why they themselves cannot resolve them (1990a, pp.145-146).

The first strand, that is, the superiority of Thomism over Aristotelianism and Augustinianism does not concern me here. As one

objective of this chapter is to show that Thomism's rival traditions do not necessarily have to acknowledge its superiority, I shall emphasize the second strand which deals with the relation between Thomism and its rivals.

V.2 The Rational Superiority of Thomism over Rival Theories

MacIntyre claims that the superiority of Thomism over later challenges, i.e. Cartesian, Humean, Kantian and Nietzschean critiques can be shown provided that the advocates of Thomism do not assume they share with their opponents in respect of their concepts of rational enquiry and first principles more than they in fact share. The rational superiority of Thomism over these alternatives means that Thomism can account for the limitations of these rivals according to their own standards, in a way that they themselves cannot, and then can provide these traditions with resources to overcome these crises (1990a, p.146).

MacIntyre's criticism of modern epistemological accounts of Thomism after Joseph Kleutgen, German Thomist theologian and philosopher (1811-1883), can be understood in line with this approach (2006f, p.148). The neo-Thomists since Kleutgen followed Descartes' method by trying to offer an epistemological picture of Thomism in which they start from first principles to prove subordinate truths; this method is different from the dialectical and metaphysical picture offered by MacIntyre. As opposed to this, in MacIntyre's view, the superiority of Thomism over its rivals consists not in its ability to establish its claims on the basis of its first principles such that they become convincing for any rational human being; rather, it lies in its resourcefulness and capacity to explain and remove the defects of its rivals (2006f, p.148).

The rational superiority of Thomism claimed by MacIntyre applies to the Scottish Enlightenment, Kantian deontology, genealogy and Liberalism in general. I shall start with MacIntyre's criticism of the Scottish

216

Enlightenment in 17th and 18th century, which appeared in the theories of Hutcheson, Reid, Stair and Hume.[38]

Excluding Hume, the picture of the Scottish Enlightenment depicted by MacIntyre is as follows. According to the dominant account of practical rationality in this tradition, we can conclude subordinate truths by deduction from first principles. Moral philosophy had a significant and increasing role in this tradition in order to defend fundamental moral principles. The justification of first principles gradually was extended from within the Church of Scotland to philosophical forums.

Four important characteristics of the Scottish tradition in MacIntyre's view are as follows. 1) It was a theological and Calvinist tradition, 2) a certain knowledge of God was the keystone of all enquiries, 3) its conception of justice was not based on passions or interests; rather, it was based on certain moral principles, and 4) reason was regarded as the master of the passions, and as being capable of motivating human beings to abide by first principles (1988a, pp.253-255).

In MacIntyre's account, Hutcheson is the moral philosopher who tried to provide a moral epistemology for this tradition. Taking the idea of affection from Shaftesbury, Hutcheson sought to show how morality is grounded in human nature. In his view, moral sense supplies human beings with the first principles upon which we can base our moral thinking. For Hutcheson, the role of reason is limited to subordinate ends and to what is conducive to our final end about which there is no reasoning. It is the moral sense that furnishes us with these final ends which are first and evident principles of our practical rationality. Accordingly, in this view, reason is impotent and actions are produced by the kind of motivation that is caused by the moral sense, and in this respect Hutcheson confronted the fourth point above regarding the mastery of reason over passions in the Scottish tradition (1988a, pp.255 & 267). The role of reason is limited to the second level of the two-tiered structure of duties and rights that Hutcheson

---

[38]In the present discussion, I confine myself to the interpretations of these figures offered by MacIntyre, and do not discuss where these accounts are correct or not.

depicted. At this level, reason can deduce secondary rights and duties from the rights that the moral sense enjoins upon us (1988a, p.275).

Hutcheson has narrowed the role of reason compared to Aristotle. MacIntyre (1988a, p.272) states that, in Aristotle's view, though we do not deliberate about final ends, we reason about them, which means we use final ends as the major premises of our practical reasoning, and draw conclusions from them. By comparison, in Hutcheson's view, as he states in *A System of Moral Philosophy* (book 1, ch.III) "We prosecute them [ultimate ends] by some immediate disposition or determination of soul", which is always prior to all reasoning. I think MacIntyre's point here, which is also made about Hume, is that for these philosophers we do not put the commands of passions or of the moral sense in the frame of practical syllogisms; our actions do not hang on the results of practical reasoning; we act or should act spontaneously upon desires or the command of the moral sense; while for Aristotle we form practical syllogisms on the basis of the good.

Another significant difference between Hutcheson's and Aristotle's accounts of practical rationality concerns the role of *"phronesis"* in practical reasoning, which has been reversed by Hutcheson. In Aristotle's view, the intellectual virtue of *phronesis* is prior to practical reasoning, which means we should be virtuous before being able to think what is right. The wisdom of righteous action is known to the virtuous agent. Aquinas, also, considers *phronesis,* translated by him as *prudentia,* as the first virtue of the four cardinal virtues. As opposed to this, in Hutcheson's view, the moral sense can inform us of right actions prior to learning how to be prudent and practically intelligent (1988a, p.276). By *prudentia*, Hutcheson did not mean *phronesis*; rather, he meant the ability to consider in advance what is or what is not advantageous, which then guides our natural affections in terms of which he defined the virtues (1992c, p.1760).

Accordingly, while Hutcheson inherited his account of morality from scholastic Aristotelianism and Calvinism, he was led into what MacIntyre (1988, p.278) calls a "philosophical artefact", that is, the idea of the moral sense as a common faculty in human beings. The Scholastic background of

218

Hutcheson is clear in his theory of justice according to which justice is desert-based, independent of our interests and passions. Hutcheson's aim was to provide a motivating reason available to anyone by basing morality on the moral sense.

I take MacIntyre to mean here that Hutcheson's failure is due to his departure from Aristotelianism, in particular in respect of his account of *phronesis*. By dropping the role of *phronesis* and the moral role of community, Hutcheson has based his ethics on human nature as such which cannot account, in MacIntyre's view, for the diversities in what people feel as moral sense.

Two further aspects of Hutcheson's thought indicate this departure from Aristotelianism, causing problems for his moral theory. The first is that Hutcheson adopted the new way of ideas from Malebranche, Shaftesbury, and Locke. In MacIntyre's view, the problem with all these versions of the new way of ideas is that they only allow for the derivation of particular perceptions from particular experiences, and not the kind of substantially general claims of the moral sense. In Hutcheson's view, there are socially shared standards about rightness and justice. However, these common standards, in MacIntyre's view, cannot be derived on the basis of the new way of ideas which is individualistic and particularistic in its nature (1988a, p.270).

The second problem with Hutcheson's method is related to Locke's nominalistic approach which started to become a commonplace approach against the rational and metaphysical methods of Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza. MacIntyre (1988a, p.254) holds that Locke's nominalism was incompatible with the knowledge of universal principles which was central to the Scottish tradition.

To explain, nominalism rejects the view of human beings as having an essence that is common to all humankind; as a result, it would be, in MacIntyre's view, inconsistent with formulating moral principles based on universal claims about human nature, since the existence of a shared thread of human beings, which accounts for their common moral principles, is

219

denied by nominalism; as MacIntyre puts the point, "Locke's nominalism was in crucial respects incompatible with the claim to a knowledge of universal principles so central to this Scottish tradition" (1988a, p.254).

These remarks indicate the kind of epistemological crisis that MacIntyre implicitly imputes to the Scottish Enlightenment. The main points in this regard can be summed up as follows. This tradition attempted to provide rational and objective explanations for morality independently of its own theological and Scholastic background. Its nominalistic ontology, the emerging new way of ideas and reversing the relation between the virtues and practical rationality prevented the accomplishment of this task.

I assume it is clear why MacIntyre would claim the rational superiority of Thomism over the Scottish tradition, since all these defects, in his view, can be both explained and overcome by it, as there is an essentialist account of human nature and an emphasis on the role of the virtues in this tradition, which can provide a rational justification for ethics; an ethics that is both universal and particular. It is universal since it appeals to the essence of human beings as the basis of ethics and to the universal precepts of the natural law, and is particularistic since it takes into account the role of the virtues and the secondary precepts of the natural law which guide the moral agent to act morally in particular situations.

Two alternatives were raised against Hutcheson to make his moral theory consistent, as his notion of the moral sense failed to prove credible about human nature. Hume and Adam Smith retained his moral epistemology, and changed his view of moral principles and justice. Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart did the reverse, and rejected his moral epistemology (1988a, p.280).

MacIntyre seems to mean here that these subsequent moral philosophers became aware of the epistemological crisis in Hutcheson's work, and attempted to resolve it. Hume followed Hutcheson in that for both reason is inert, and only the passions activate us. They also based morality on an account of human nature that was thought to be universal, and so failed to account for moral diversity (1988a, p.285).

For Hume, passions are thought of as original existences that are not susceptible to rational evaluation; in other words, there is no further criterion for judging passions as rational or irrational (1988a, p.301); whereas in Aristotle's view, desires become rational as a result of the exercise of the virtues (1988a, p.136). For Aristotle, desires as such are not the final measures of moral judgments, and they are subject to rational and moral evaluations by the standards of the virtues and the good. Nevertheless, in Hume's view as presented by MacIntyre (1988a, p.306), passions are not totally without any evaluative criteria for their assessment. Hume distinguishes between calm and violent passions, defining the calm passions as those passions that help us become sociable and amicable toward others. Violent passions are expressed in our immediate reactions to particular situations in which we do not think about their effects on our interests. Virtues require the cultivation of calm passions (1988a, p.300).

This distinction shows that, in Hume's view, it is possible to reason about passions, but this process of reasoning, unless it is backed by some kind of passions, is not active and would not be translated into action (1988a, p.301). In this view, passions and their satisfaction are not subject to practical rationality. Practical rationality is limited to instrumental reasoning about the satisfaction of passions and desires. In this view, virtues and vices are defined respectively in terms of the sentiments of approbation and disapprobation which arise in us toward some actions; moral attributes are features of our sentiments and passions, not objects and matters of fact (1966, p.164).

In MacIntyre's view (1988a, pp.294-295), though Hume depicted a universal picture of human nature, this account was only at home in a social setting in which the expression of pride was central, and property rights which were used in his theory of justice were absolute. MacIntyre on this basis criticizes Hume's moral theory as follows.

The first point is that Hume's account of human nature, which served as the foundation of his morality, was not universal and took as its ideal 18th century England as a commercial society in which the expression of pride is

central; furthermore, the characterization of passions and the objects of humility and pride depicted by Hume are particular to a specific culture and social setting, though he was not aware of this locality (1988a, pp.293-295).

The second problem with Hume's moral thought lies in his theory of justice which is based on preserving property rights that are unmodified by human needs. This view of justice, in MacIntyre's view, is alien to the Platonic and Aristotelian conviction shared also by Aquinas and Scottish society according to which gross inequalities might lead to social conflict and revolution. This Aristotelian and Thomistic view does not take appropriation of others' properties out of severe need as a violation of justice. Accordingly, while in Hume's view the rights of property and the idea of justice would serve to establish social stability, his view regarding the absoluteness of property rights might cause social instability and contradict their function (1988a, pp.307-308).

MacIntyre's third criticism of Hume, which is more fundamental and also related to the second objection, concerns Hume's systematic adoption of the new way of ideas. As was explained earlier, the language of the new way of ideas, either in its Cartesian or empiricist version, is from the first-person point of view; i.e. it is about my impressions and ideas. This makes Hume's transition from the egoism of a first-person point of view to a third-person observer in his moral theory problematic. Based on a first-person point of view, the notion of personal identity which is attained socially and from others' point of view disappears (1988a, p.291).

MacIntyre's fourth criticism of Hume concerns the existence of the elements of emotivism in his moral theory. MacIntyre (1981, p.14) contends that it was in the 18th century that emotivism appeared as a theory on its own. The problem with emotivism, in MacIntyre's view, is that moral arguments on this basis are inconclusive, as they are only expressions of subjective sentiments. This state, in MacIntyre's view (1981, pp.33-34), is a result of the rejection of the Aristotelian and the Thomistic notion of the human final end which was used to provide an objective and common measure for the evaluation of moral sentiments.

222

The universalistic attitude to human nature appears also in Thomas Reid's moral theory according to which the exercise of practical rationality does not require a particular social setting or an agreement about human passions; rather, the truths of common sense are available to all people of sound mind. As opposed to Aristotle and Hume, who stigmatize some people as barbarians, in Reid's view, these people might have a better grasp of these fundamental truths as they are not misled by philosophical theorizing (1988a, pp.324-325).

MacIntyre in *After Virtue* is basically against the attempt to provide a picture of human nature that is prior to particular cultures. In his view, the biological features of human beings as a species cannot provide us with the standards of utility or pleasure for a human being *qua* an animal which is prior to and without any particular culture. He admits that our biological nature surely puts some constraints on the possible cultural forms that we may happen to take, but not to the extent that it can create a man without a culture; for MacIntyre "man without culture is a myth ... a creature of whom we know nothing" (1981, p.161).

Based on this approach, MacIntyre (1981, p.160) holds that the objects of pleasure and pain depend on the kind of person we are, which in turn is a matter of our virtues and vices. In line with this, MacIntyre criticizes the Enlightenment project for attempting to provide a universal formulation for morality. MacIntyre's main point here is that this project construed tradition as an external authority that is mixed with superstitions. The pervasive account of human nature at the time was at odds with a teleological approach to the world including human nature. MacIntyre (1981, p.54) ascribes to all of the Enlightenment philosophers, Kant, Hume, Adam Smith, Diderot and later on Kierkegaard, a denial that human nature has an essence that defines its true ends. Hence the idea of a human being ceased to be a functional concept in moral propositions, the functions of which were once used to provide an objective basis for morality. This change, in turn, led them to propose an unqualified version of Hume's principle that evaluative arguments cannot be directly derived from factual premises. This

principle, in MacIntyre's view (1981, p.57), is not universal, since it does not apply to factual statements about human nature if a functional and teleological picture of human nature is at work, as a functional account of things embodies the basis of normative judgments about them based on their function; for instance, we can judge a watch good or bad based on its function.

Each of the Enlightenment philosophers and their heirs in the 19th century has tried in a way to fill the gap between the factual premises and the evaluative conclusions in their moral reasoning. Hume and Diderot appeal to human desires, Kant to the notion of categorical imperatives, Kierkegaard had recourse to radical choice, Bentham and J.S. Mill to the notions of utility and maximum happiness. These are among the attempts toward the objective justification of moral principles in a non-teleological context, and independently of theology.

MacIntyre's criticism of the Enlightenment project is that the moral principles and rules that they arrived at were formal, but the content they had in mind for these rules implicitly presupposed the codes of behaviour of their particular culture and society; accordingly, they could not justify substantial universal moral principles to apply to all moral agents irrespective of their local tradition (1981, pp.44-46).

In particular, MacIntyre (1981, p.46) holds that Kant's method of categorical imperative does not work, because there are some immoral and trivial non-moral issues which pass this test, but are not moral principles; for instance, 'Keep all your promises throughout your entire life except one', 'Persecute all those who hold false religious beliefs', and 'always eat mussels on Mondays in March' are respectively immoral and trivial non-moral principles which can be acted upon universally, and so they meet the categorical imperative test of Kant without being the kind of moral principles which he had in mind.

MacIntyre's point here is that, as was explained in chapter 2, Kant's moral theory is a formal one whose substance is derived from his Lutheran background, not from his moral theory as such (1981, p.44). MacIntyre

likens the categorical imperative of Kant and its ensuing categorical moral obligations to the taboos that Captain Cook encountered in the Pacific Islands. Cook and his sailors were told that men and women could not eat together. The islanders were not able to explain the reason for this taboo, except by saying it was an absolute requirement that could not be explained further (1971b, p.166; [1977] 1981b, pp.124-125).

To explain, the Islanders' taboos had been intelligible in a context that once had been available; so they cannot justify the moral obligation of these taboos to those who are out of this context, like Captain Cook and his sailors, or indeed, to themselves as they do not have access to those background beliefs.[39] By the same token, I take MacIntyre here to mean, the unconditional moral obligations that Kant deduces from his method of categorical impetrative derive their binding power from their particular social and cultural context without which they cannot be universally justified for all rational agents. Based on this, MacIntyre ([1977] 1981b, p.125) concludes that "We do not take *taboo* seriously; why then should we take seriously Kant's or Prichard's *ought?*".[40]

MacIntyre also criticizes utilitarianism as a project that proposed to posit new conceptions of *telos* for morality in a context in which the Aristotelian account of the good was not prevalent any longer. Jeremy Bentham, MacIntyre (1981, p.63) argues, thought of morality as being pervaded by superstition until we admit that the only motives for human actions are aversion to pain and attraction to pleasures. The maximization of pleasure became a *telos*. The task of the social reformer, for Bentham as presented by MacIntyre (1981, p.63), is to reconstruct social orders such

---

[39] I am grateful to Lutz for correcting me on the point that these taboos, in MacIntyre's account, had even become unintelligible for the Islanders, because the taboos had lost their social and cultural background.

[40] I think this judgment is unfair to Kant, because although the character of Kant's morality like any other moral philosopher's is related to its social and cultural setting; however, his moral theory follows a logic, that is respecting the dignity of humanity as an end in itself; therefore, a Kantian can justify his morality following this logic; while the islander might lack this possibility.

that the individual pursuit of happiness coincides with the greatest possible happiness for the greatest possible number of people.

J. S. Mill, instead of Bentham's quantitative method, adopted a qualitative approach to the notion of happiness in which he distinguishes between higher and lower pleasures. The effect of this amendment, in MacIntyre's view (1981, p.63), was the conclusion that made utilitarianism's appeal to the notion of happiness useless; namely, the view that the notion of human happiness is not "a unitary, simple notion and cannot provide us with a criterion for making our key choices" (1981, p.63).

The argument at this point relates to the notion of value-incommensurability, which was explained in the previous chapter. The point is that, in MacIntyre's account, different pleasures are not a single state of mind to which different activities are means. The pleasure of "drinking Guinness" is not the same pleasure as "swimming at Crane's Beach"; the happiness of "the way of life of the cloister" is not the same as that of the military life. These pleasures are incommensurable; and an appeal to the notion of happiness or pleasures *per se* does not let the individual decide which kind of pleasure to choose (1981, p.64).

The continuous reformulation of utilitarianism in the 19th century culminated in Sidgwick's intuitionism. Sidgwick admitted the failure of restoring a teleological framework for ethics, and that our moral beliefs are heterogeneous and are based on some final intuitions for which no rational justification is possible. Intuitionism provided the ground for emotivism in Britain, the same way as pragmatism did in the USA (1981, pp.64-66). According to emotivism, moral judgments are nothing other and more than the expression of individual preferences which cannot be predicated as true or false (1981, p.60).

Another criticism of utilitarianism offered by MacIntyre is that it does not feature the division of pleasures into those internal and external to practices. From the Aristotelian perspective, some pleasures supervene on actions as external goods such as fame, money and prestige; while some pleasures are the result of the achievement of the internal goods of practices.

226

Utilitarianism, including the utilitarianism of Benjamin Franklin, cannot accommodate this distinction. In other words, there would be different pleasures and goods some of which are internal and some of which are external to practices. The resulting problem is that Utilitarianism cannot rank order these different kinds of pleasure, and they become incommensurable. When people have different accounts of pleasures, "the notion of summing goods and happiness in terms of one single conception of utility makes no sense" (1981, pp.198-199); whereas in Aristotelianism an overriding notion of the good can serve as a basis for the subordination of external goods and pleasures to the internal ones.

MacIntyre also made an earlier criticism of utilitarianism, which reflects his Marxist background. In this criticism, he emphasizes that our desires are not given facts; rather, they are constructed according to the objects of desires, which are offered to us. What we desire and want are not just biological features; they are an "intelligible response to what we are offered". In this view, we learn to want and desire something rather than something else, and modern capitalism through advertising and its social order manipulates people's desires (1964, p.8).

MacIntyre (1964, p.2) maintained there that we have come to admit that moral disagreements cannot be settled, and we take this as an inherent feature of morality. In these circumstances, we appeal to "our second morality", that is, utilitarianism in order to organize public policies. Utilitarianism claims that it does not enjoin the performance or non-performance of any action; its only measure is the performance of any action, whatever it is, that produces the maximum happiness for the majority of people. In other words, utilitarianism does not stigmatize actions as good or bad on their content. An action might be good or bad in different circumstances based on the consequences it produces. As a result of the dominance of utilitarianism, our society and our education system cannot discover ends on the basis of which to provide people with sufficient reasons for their actions; MacIntyre holds, for instance, "Last year a student whom I knew well had a breakdown as a result of taking seriously the

227

question, 'What am I studying for?' The chain of reasons had no ending" (1964, pp.1-2).

Utilitarianism, thus, does not enter into the discussion about the intrinsic value of actions; it claims to be neutral regarding different moral theories which assign moral worth to different actions, and only concerns the maximization of whatever notion of happiness the greatest possible number of people have. This theory, in MacIntyre's view, leaves the questions about what notion of happiness is worthwhile for us to pursue, and what our final end is, unanswered; whereas Aristotelianism and Thomism can provide us with an account of the good and of the common good.

The preceding remarks show that as a result of purging morality of the Aristotelian notion of the good and appealing to a notion of practical rationality independent of the particularity of traditions, in MacIntyre's view, neither Kantian deontology, and other moral philosophers of the Enlightenment, nor the teleology of utilitarianism was capable of providing a universal account of morality.

In MacIntyre's view morality in such a non-teleological context is the linguistic survival of the classical tradition in which human beings by nature had the function of moving toward the common good and their individual good which were in harmony with each other. In the new milieu and in the absence of the common good, which once was used as a common criterion to vindicate moral judgments, there are only some moral judgments wrenched from their context. Whatever these moral judgments mean and to whatsoever objective criteria they appeal, they do not reveal anything but personal preferences; so MacIntyre (1981, p.22) maintains that emotivism is deeply rooted in our culture.

Based on this exposition, it is not difficult to understand why MacIntyre claims rational superiority for Aristotelianism and Thomism over the other traditions sketched above. The main point here is that, as the explanation above indicates, these two traditions can, in MacIntyre's view,

228

analyse and remedy the malaises of modern individualistic moral theories better than can they themselves (1990, p.146).

Accordingly, if we construe the challenge of emotivism as an epistemological and moral crisis, the way MacIntyre prescribes getting out of it, as was argued above, is by an appeal to an Aristotelian and Thomistic notion of the final end for human beings, which can prioritize the acquisition of the virtues, including the virtue of *phronesis*, over the capacity of practical reasoning. The good serves as the measure for the definition of genuine human desires, pleasures and their comparison with each other; a feature which utilitarianism, in MacIntyre's account, falls short of.

While genealogy fails in providing an etiology for the failure of the Enlightenment and the post-Enlightenment moral philosophies in the rational justification of morality, as will be explained below, Thomism can carry out this task. In MacIntyre's view (1990a, pp.192-193), Thomism's diagnosis of this quandary is that the concept of morality that underlies this situation is a modern notion which consists of the remnants of a previously valid system. This poses unsolvable difficulties, unless the concepts are returned to their prior context. Modern individualism and unconstrained pluralism undermine the meaning and the authority of moral oughts.

MacIntyre also extends the claim of the rational superiority of Thomism to include the anti-Enlightenment genealogy of Nietzsche and post-Nietzscheans. In MacIntyre's view (1990a, p.50), there is "a self-endangering paradox" in the genealogy project. The explanation is that this project sought to deconstruct the self and reduce Western morality and the 19th century *Encyclopaedia*'s pattern of the rational justification of ethics, in Nietzsche's case, to the will to power. However, MacIntyre (1990a, p.54) argues that this deconstruction project itself makes sense only for a "persistent and substantial" self that is not perspectival; i.e. it has a continuous identity that does not dissolve into masks and moments. In this view, genealogy would founder by its own standards, because it cannot make itself intelligible if its account of the self, with regard to both the

audience and the speaker, lacks fixity. There should be a fixed self to speak or to be addressed.

As D'Andrea (2006, p.347) states MacIntyre's point, the genealogical critique should be communicable to an audience if it wants to succeed. This communication assumes that there are a-temporal standards of reference, reason-giving and reason-assessing. This view, in turn, assumes a metaphysics that is at odds with genealogy, so universal genealogy fails on its own grounds. In D'Andrea's view (2006, p.348), MacIntyre's point here is that there needs to be a continuing self behind the transitory unmasking selves which discard their identities once the task of unmasking is completed; this continuing self is necessary to make intelligible the narrative of success and failure in unmasking projects.

M. Clifford (2001, p.161) maintains that the difference between the Thomist and the genealogist lies in that the latter rejects "the grounded, epistemological or metaphysical given-ness of the I", in favour of a self that is "bound to and effected by anonymous factors that precede it and sustain it as such." Interpreting MacIntyre's claim, Clifford presents the same thesis about genealogy as does MacIntyre. He holds that genealogy finds itself using the same kind of metaphysical postulates that it was criticizing regarding Western ethics; for instance, the notion of the will to power used by Nietzsche is a kind of metaphysical entity in the conventional sense; as a result by "the end of *Beyond Good and Evil,* we see Nietzsche turning his critical suspicion against his own thoughts, and in so doing, attempting to effect their erasure" (Clifford 2001, p.159).

MacIntyre furthers his critique of genealogy by saying that this tradition in two ways discredits the notion of accountability; one is by denying any notion of aperspectival truth, and the other is by proposing the possibility of indefinite plurality in the interpretation of texts. As opposed to this, Thomism, on the one hand, considers texts as relatively fixed, though related to each other and historically developing, and on the other hand, takes it to be possible to rescue ourselves from power-relationships through Socratic dialectical and Augustinian confessional activities; while

230

genealogy understands these activities as the disguises of the impersonal will to power (1990a, p.205).

In MacIntyre's view (1990a, p.147), Thomism can provide a genealogy for Nietzsche's "genealogizing", based on Aquinas' injunctions about the roots of intellectual blindness in moral errors and in the corruption of the will by the sin of pride. The Thomist can argue that Nietzsche's notion of the will to power is a disguise for the corrupted will; on this basis, the activity of unmasking itself would be a mask for pride. In this Thomistic view, the will to power would be construed as an "intellectual fiction disguising the corruption of the will" (1990a, p.147).

These remarks show that, in MacIntyre's view, genealogy, though it has been right to reject the Enlightenment's and the post-enlightenment's endeavours to provide a rational and objective justification for morality, inherently embodies an epistemological crisis that is not resolvable based on its own internal standards; furthermore, Thomism, as explained above, can provide an intelligible narrative about the moral tradition that has cleared the ground for the emergence of genealogical morality, and explained why this tradition itself cannot resolve its epistemological and moral predicaments. In other words, just as Hume's principle regarding the non-derivability of normative judgments from factual judgments is not a non-conditional principle, and only applies to morality after it has lost its functional and teleological account of the human being, the genealogical thought that all rational justifications are disguises for wills to power does not apply to morality as such; rather, it is a feature of a morality that is devoid of any notion of the good. Aristotelianism and Thomism, in MacIntyre's view, can explain why a genealogical interpretation of morality has emerged, and how it is possible to discard it.

V.3 An Evaluation of MacIntyre's Claim Regarding the Rational Superiority of Thomism

In my view, MacIntyre's account of the rational superiority of Thomism as presented above is not convincing, and, in addition, he has

deviated from the method he himself has proposed for evaluating rational superiority, as will be explained below.

As was argued in the previous chapter, in MacIntyre's view (1988a p.365), the disclosure and solution of epistemological crises should be based on the internal measures of the crisis-traditions. On this basis, the rationally inferior tradition "A" should come to the conclusion that that the superior tradition "B" can resolve A's crises using "B" resources but based on A's own standards. MacIntyre's exposition of the superiority of Thomism does not fit this scheme, particularly with regard to radically rival traditions.

One condition for a successful resolution of an epistemological crisis in MacIntyre's view (1988a, p.362) is that, as pointed out in chapter 4, the new concepts and theories designed for the resolution of the crisis should "exhibit... some fundamental continuity" in the tradition before and after the resolution. However, when radical disputes and radically rival traditions are at play, it would be almost impossible to keep this continuity. For instance, Genealogy based on its own account of the self and its standards of enquiry surely opposes the Thomistic explanation of its predicament, and indeed it might not recognize the existence of such a predicament within itself; furthermore, it considers MacIntyre's diagnosis of this predicament and his prescription for it as an further affirmation of its own idea of the will to power.

The non-neutrality of MacIntyre reveals itself further in his view that the genealogical notion of the will to power can be taken and explained in terms of the Thomistic notion of sin and the corrupted will. I am not arguing that MacIntyre has avowed to be neutral in his prescriptions; as he puts it, "there is no theoretically neutral, pretheoretical ground from which the adjudication of competing claims can proceed" (1990a, p.173); nevertheless, my point is that this exegesis is not based on the internal measures of the genealogical tradition which rejects any place for the notions of God and sin. There still remains a way for MacIntyre to defend his theory, which will be explained below.

232

This methodological problem for MacIntyre also surfaces in his discussion of Hutcheson and Hume. MacIntyre's point was that Hutcheson and Hume could not make their moral theories consistent with their notions of the new way of ideas which is particularistic and is conducted from the first-person point of view. The new way of ideas is associated with conceptualism or nominalism according to which only mental concepts abstracted from individuals are universal; in this view, anything that exists is individual and does not need to be made individual (R. Campbell 1992, p.206). Based on this view, there is no notion of the human essence as a shared feature of human beings, which can be used as a basis of morality.

The corollary of MacIntyre's claim would be that these authors should turn back to Aristotle's and Aquinas' non-nominalistic way of ideas to resolve their tensions, from which they have many reasons to dissent. I am not claiming here that this non-nominalistic view is wrong, but that it is not acceptable from within Hutcheson's and Hume's conceptual scheme.

A proponent of utilitarianism also may argue, in response to MacIntyre, that in conditions in which people have and pursue different incommensurable values and goods, the best option is to ensure that the majority of them satisfy their happiness. Surely, as MacIntyre pointed out above, the pleasure of drinking is not the same as the pleasure of swimming, and the principle of utility does not tell us how to choose between the two and between many others; but the utilitarian might well argue that we can take utilitarianism as the moral philosophy of public policy, and not as a philosophy that will instruct individuals what kind of pleasure they should choose in their private lives. In other words, individuals are free to make up their minds regarding whether they should drink or swim, in so far as they do not threaten the public order which maintains the public good and the utility of the majority.[41]

---

[41] My main purpose in this discussion is to show how different traditions might have reasons to dispute Thomism's claim to superiority. These reasons sometimes might be ideological in the sense that individuals might have non-epistemic reasons for clinging to their received beliefs, for instance, for the sense of belonging which they have in light of these beliefs or under the influence of a tyrannical government. Lutz has pointed out to me

Having briefly explained some possible responses that the rivals of Aristotelianism and Thomism might make against MacIntyre's claims, in what follows I shall point to some defects in Thomism, which challenge MacIntyre's claim about its rational superiority. MacIntyre has not sufficiently discussed the possible criticisms of Thomism by its rivals, and has not exposed it to its rivals' critiques to support the claim that its account of practical rationality and justice would survive once they are exposed to criticisms; as MacIntyre puts it:

> Those who have thought their way through the topics of justice and practical rationality, from the standpoint constructed by ... Aristotle and then by Aquinas, have every reason at least so far to hold that the rationality of their tradition has been confirmed in its encounters with other traditions (1988a, pp.402-403).

However, MacIntyre has not subjected Thomism to its rival's critiques to check its adequacy. For instance, one possible objection against Thomism concerns the coherence between Aquinas' account of human nature and his account of the natural law tradition. W. T. Jones (1969, p.298, cited in M. Fuller (1998, p.35)) holds that there is an inconsistency between Aquinas' account of post-Fall man and his view that human beings have a capacity to become virtuous which can be developed by education through their life in family and community. If human nature is corrupted as a result of original sin, how does it have this capacity to become virtuous and to move toward the good and the best by nature?

Another criticism concerns the issue of individuals' moral responsibility. Aquinas emphasizes the necessity of having the infused theological virtues of charity, hope, etc., to remedy the radical defect in human nature; but if these virtues are infused, and they are based on divine grace, it would be difficult to make sense of the moral responsibility of

---

that MacIntyre is aware of this, where he argues in the "The End of Ideology, and the End of the End of Ideology" in *Against the Self-Images of the Age* that ideological commitments might prevent people from asking some questions; however, my discussion here goes beyond ideological commitments, as I seek to argue that people in rival traditions might have genuine intellectual reasons for not succumbing to a rival tradition's claim to superiority; reasons which are different from mere ideological commitments.

agents. In Aquinas' account, as the passage below indicates, our turning toward God is dependent on His turn toward us, and this makes our blameworthiness as a result of wrongdoing difficult to justify, as it has not been within our control:

> Man's turning to God is by free-will; and thus man is bidden to turn himself to God. But free-will can only be turned to God, when God turns it ... 'Convert me and I shall be converted, for Thou art the Lord, my God' (*ST*, I, Q.23, Art.3).

Aquinas' answer (*ST*, I, Q.23, Art.3) to this criticism, that is, reprobation[42] by God does not take anything away from the power and the liberty of the choice of the reprobate, is not compelling, because the possession or the lack of theological virtues surely affects individuals' power of decision-making and their resistance against corrupted desires.

Another criticism refers to Aquinas' explanation about people of religions other than Christianity. I. Markham (1991, p.263) points to two of these explanations particularly regarding Islam and Judaism, based on human sinfulness and predestination. This kind of explanation about the existence of rival traditions does not fit with the fallibilistic account of Thomism presented by MacIntyre. Fallibilism requires us to take other rival views as attempts toward the truth, from which we should learn, and not simply to reject them as mistaken on the grounds of sinfulness.

This daunting picture of Aquinas particularly comes to the fore in his attitudes toward heretics. Aquinas (*ST*, II, Q.11, Art.3) opposes the view that heretics should be tolerated so that they have the opportunity to repent. In his view, heresy is a sin that corrupts the faith, and so makes the heretic deserve not only to be excommunicated from the church, but also from the world by death. He makes the analogy that as there is reason for the capital punishment of a person who forges money and other evil-doers by secular authority, there is more reason for putting the heretic to death.

---

[42]It means here to abandon to eternal damnation

S. M. Okin (1991) from a feminist position attacks the Aristotelian/Augustinian/Thomistic view of woman and their inferiority to men, and so challenges MacIntyre's claim about the superiority of Thomism over Liberalism. Okin (1991, p.44) writes that MacIntyre uses "a false gender-neutral language"; for instance, MacIntyre uses "he or she", "his or her"…, in his writing about contexts, that is ancient Greeks, in which this kind of language is absurd, because women were not citizens and did not have access to different goods available in the *polis*. The good life in the Aristotelian sense excludes a majority of people including all women from achieving it (Okin 1991, p.52). Okin (1991, p.54) casts doubts on MacIntyre's account that this aspect of Aristotle's moral theory can be rectified without denying his central claims about the best kind of *polis*, because Aristotle's view of women is related to his biological writing in which women are introduced as a deformity that occurs in the ordinary course of nature. B. Barry (1989, p.163) emphasizes the same point, holding that as Aristotle's sociology is rooted in his biology "a good deal of generosity" is required to maintain this his views about natural slaves and women are nonessential to his political theory.

Okin (1991, p.57) also points to Augustine's account of women as being of lower reason or sensuality, which is symbolized by Eve's role in the Fall. In Okin's view (1991, pp.57-58), this account of women as associated with sin is also synthesized with Aristotle's teleological biology in Aquinas' work; this is despite the fact that MacIntyre finds in Aquinas' work the best account of practical rationality and justice. Aquinas considers a woman as "a misbegotten male" who is naturally subject to man in whom reason predominates. Aquinas discusses whether women should be resurrected as men, and if they have been included in the original Creation (Okin 1991, p.60). Okin (1991, p.60) concludes that women cannot find the kind of "calm coherence" which MacIntyre finds in Aquinas' tradition.

The preceding remarks the full development and evaluation of which are not my present concern indicate that firstly MacIntyre's claim about the rational superiority of Thomism is not based on its rival traditions' internal

236

measures, and secondly, these traditions, as partly alluded to above, have genuine reasons to reject this claim to superiority.

As I pointed out above, there remains a way for MacIntyre to respond to the criticism that his evaluation of Thomism is not conducted in terms of internal measures of rival traditions. This response is in line with my argument about the distinction between MacIntyre's CT and relativism in the preceding chapter. I argued there that in so far as MacIntyre holds the disclosure and rectification of epistemological crises are to be conducted on the basis of internal standards he cannot discard the charge of relativism; then I pointed to MacIntyre's view that he thinks it possible, and indeed, necessary for the very internal standards of a tradition to undergo evaluation and modification which needs to be done on the basis of some measures independent of that tradition.

The fact that, in MacIntyre's view (1981, p.2), modern morality is in a state of crisis and intellectual destitution suggests that modern morality itself cannot recognize the occurrence of this crisis, at least, upon its own measures. In other words, traditions might degenerate to such a degree that they do not have the measures to recognize, let alone the resources to overcome, their epistemological crises. Accordingly, that the recognition and resolution of epistemological crises might not be in terms of internal standards is compatible with MacIntyre's general moral thought, as in his view modern morality has deteriorated into a state in which it cannot acknowledge its own decline. This answer, however, violates MacIntyre's method for discovering epistemological crises, and it means that MacIntyre has in mind a sense of moral decline informed by norms derived not from these traditions. MacIntyre is not hesitant to admit his partiality in his defence of Thomism:

> We cannot vindicate the objectivity of good except from positions which already presuppose it...Any profession of neutrality on fundamental value questions will always turn out to be a covert and therefore misleading commitment to a subjectivist preference-based view of good (1993, p.17).

But the question that arises here is that if the belief in the superiority of Thomism is informed by MacIntyre's avowed prior partiality regarding this tradition, why are rival traditions which lack this orientation, rationally obliged to admit this superiority? And how can we understand the "disquieting suggestion" about modern morality's catastrophic situation with which MacIntyre begins his *After Virtue*. This judgment, if it is supposed to be accepted by a tradition, should be based on measures that can be shown to be binding for it.

In fairness to MacIntyre, some part of his criticism of Hume's account of justice, along the lines that it does not consider that too much social and economical inequality might hinder public participation in discussions about the common good and the good as was mentioned earlier, is not dependent on particularly Aristotelian and Thomistic convictions. Without these convictions, we still are able to admit the truth of this claim, because basic human goods are at stake here, the necessity of the provision of which can be argued for independently of these two traditions. This is in line with my vulnerability approach which will be explained in the next chapter.

In this section, I sketched how Thomism's rivals cannot admit the rational superiority of Thomism on the basis of their own measures. They also can challenge Thomism on different grounds as briefly explained above. As a result, I here concur with Thomas Nagel's contention that "MacIntyre's religion is driving his philosophy. He wants to produce an argument that does not rely on religious premises to show that only something like a religious morality is possible. This cannot be done" (Nagel 1995, p.209).

If a tradition, like Thomism, cannot establish its superiority over its rivals based on the rivals' own measures, another option here is to argue for the existence of some shared substantial measures of rationality for traditions, which can be used to minimally evaluate them against each other, as did MacIntyre above regarding the relation between inequalities and practical reasoning. This is the strategy that I will adopt in the next chapter, and I think it is the best option in our pluralistic world in which there is no

238

consensus regarding a notion of the human good. This approach will both set some minimal constraints upon different accounts of the good life, and let us cope with the pluralistic nature of social life.

V.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I tried to investigate how MacIntyre thinks Thomism is rationally superior to its rivals, and so can make truth-claims. MacIntyre's argument consists of two parts. In the first part, MacIntyre claims the rational superiority of Thomism over Aristotelianism and Augustinianism by showing that Thomism has been able to make a consistent amalgam of these two traditions which in part have been conflicting. The role of free will, the role of supernatural virtues, the consistency between faith and reason, the afterlife-based notion of happiness and a more comprehensive theory of truth were among the areas in which Thomism has exceeded the limits of the two other traditions. As the evaluation of this claim does not relate to the issues with which I have been concerned in the present chapter, I have not undertaken it here.

In the second part, MacIntyre attempted to demonstrate the superiority of Thomism over its radical rivals by showing that these rivals are in a state of disarray, and these crises are not general features of morality; rather, they are related to the expulsion of some of the basic notions and ideals of the Aristotelian and the Thomistic traditions, i.e. the teleological and theological notion of human beings and the Aristotelian notion of the common good. In such a context, the Enlightenment project for the rational justification of morality failed, because the content of its morality stemmed from its own cultural background, which then was not possible to be formulated in terms of universally binding rules or procedures. The utilitarian alternative is not successful either, because in the absence of the Aristotelian notion of the common good, there would be incommensurable goods, which make the idea of maximizing the happiness of the majority nonsensical. Furthermore, this theory, MacIntyre holds, does not inform people of what their ends should be.

239

In MacIntyre's account, Thomism can provide a narrative for understanding the failures of its rivals, in a way that they themselves cannot accomplish. This argument is in line with MacIntyre's view of incommensurability as discussed in the previous chapter. MacIntyre's point is that we can make initial attempts to render some incommensurable schemes partly commensurable by depicting a narrative that can show and explain their merits and demerits, and can explain why some of them face an insuperable epistemological crisis. For instance, genealogy and Thomism might appear to be incommensurable, as there are no significant common standards by which to compare them; Thomism is based on theological convictions that genealogy would interpret as the will to power or in terms of power-relationships. There is no common ground by which to start rational and non-subjective arguments between them. As was argued above, in MacIntyre's view, despite this state of incommensurability, Thomism can disclose the self-defeating nature of genealogy, and explain what has happened to morality, directing it in the path of genealogy.

I then proceeded to show that MacIntyre's claim about the rational superiority of Thomism over its rivals is not convincing in two respects. Firstly, his exposition of this claim runs contrary to his method explained in the foregoing chapter in which he insisted that traditions must conclude the superiority of another tradition based on their own internal measures of rationality, and MacIntyre, as was discussed there, used this method against the charge of relativism. There is, however, plenty of latitude in each of these traditions to reformulate themselves in order to respond to what MacIntyre takes to be an epistemological crisis. Even if MacIntyre's method were successful, it would face the problem of internalism, and thus would fall short of providing a complete answer to relativism, as was explained in the previous chapter.

As I have shown that MacIntyre's method does not satisfy this internalism condition, and that his claim regarding the superiority of Thomism springs from measures outside these traditions, we can then conclude that his case against relativism is strong, because he in fact

violates his internalism, but at the expense of a failure to justify the superiority of Thomism. In other words, MacIntyre avoids the problem of relativism by distancing himself from the internalism of his method[43]; however, he then encounters the issue of justifying some external measures that amounts to the superiority of Thomism. These external measures, i.e. external to rival traditions, are MacIntyre's meta-ethical positions regarding the necessity of the objective account of the good and the narrative account of intelligibility for morality. I will return to this issue in the next chapter.

Secondly, I argued that Thomism itself faces severe intellectual challenges, including the position of women, the status of infidels and those of other faiths, and the issue of moral responsibility and its relation to divine grace.

In sum, MacIntyre's *a priori* inclination to Aristotelianism and Thomism explains his claim about the superiority of these two traditions over their rivals, which itself is based on MacIntyre's explicit expectation of a practical justification as an objective justification based on the notion of the good, and of intelligibility as based on a narrative unity. In the next chapter, I shall argue that these two accounts are not essential to morality, as distinct from ethics; a distinction that will be explained there. I will then conclude that MacIntyre's claim about the superiority of Thomism and so the occurrence of moral and epistemological crisis in modern times is not sound. If there is a crisis in modern morality it can be resolved by appeal to the resources that are available in its discourse, without the need for a Thomistic or Aristotelian notion of the good.

---

[43]In other words, MacIntyre in theory approaches this internalism; but in practice, he adopts externalism in the sense of having some external standards.

VI- Chapter 6: Criticizing MacIntyre's Notion of Narrative Intelligibility and Objective Practical Rationality

VI.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I argued that MacIntyre's claim about the rational superiority of Thomism over its rivals does not hold on the basis of the internal reasons of those traditions that MacIntyre thinks are, in fact, inferior to Thomism; MacIntyre, rather, has some meta-ethical assumptions which direct him toward this conclusion. These assumptions are MacIntyre's view of narrative intelligibility and objective practical rationality. In other words, when MacIntyre assumes the superiority of Aristotelianism and Thomism over its rivals, and that modern morality is in a state of crisis, it is because he has in mind an ideal of narrative intelligibility and of objective practical rationality based on an objective good. The aim of this chapter is to challenge these two presuppositions, and to argue that these two accounts are not essential to either the intelligibility or the morality of actions, as distinct from the ethicality of actions in a sense that will be explained later. I will, thus, provide an alternative to MacIntyre's theory of morality and intelligibility. I finally will conclude that modern morality has resources within itself to handle moral issues without the need to acknowledge the superiority of Thomism or the need for an Aristotelian conception of the human good.

My approach in this chapter, for reasons that will be explained later, can be best described as a vulnerability approach, and is inspired by a particular interpretation of Kant's ethics, which takes it not as a rigorously rule-based morality; but rather, takes it as a kind of morality that allows and cultivates the necessity of moral judgment in applying moral rules. I shall begin with MacIntyre's account of the intelligibility of actions, and then move on to discuss his account of the objectivity of the good. I should note

242

here that due to the considerations of space, the discussions in this chapter provide just an outline of a response to MacIntyre, and do not claim to offer a complete response to MacIntyre's critique of modern morality.

VI.2 MacIntyre's Account of Narrative Intelligibility

The notion of narrative has received intensive attention in MacIntyre's work. This notion is tantamount to his notion of CT (the constitution thesis in particular in its methodological sense that was explained in chapter 2), as both emphasize a kind of continuity that is found in traditions. In the present discussion, I will be concerned with narrative in relation to human actions and their intelligibility, and will leave aside its methodological aspect. To explain, as was discussed in chapter 4, a recurring theme in MacIntyre's work is that by offering a narrative we can attempt to resolve the incommensurability relation between two theories or two traditions in order to compare them with each other. MacIntyre (2006a, p.5) also emphasizes that "we are never in a position to claim that now we possess the truth or now we are fully rational." The most we can claim, according to MacIntyre, is that an account is the best account so far, and that our appraisal of the best account is always open to change in unpredictable ways (2006a, p.6).

The above point is relevant to the methodological role of tradition, which was explained in chapter 2, according to which the best measures and accounts are defined in the context of a tradition. Based on this methodological interpretation, MacIntyre argues that the history of epistemology and ethics should be written as a moral narrative within evaluative frameworks, such that its different stages can be compared to each other. An example of this approach was given in the previous chapter in which MacIntyre narrated a story about the emergence of the tradition of genealogy. However, I am not concerned in this chapter with this aspect of narrative, and instead I shall emphasize MacIntyre's notion of narrative as a part of his philosophy of action which deals with the intelligibility of actions.

To recall, as was explained in chapter 1 in connection with MacIntyre's social teleology, a narrative is a story that merges an agent's different

practices and episodes into each other in order to form a unified life which runs from his birth to his death (1981, p.217). The narrative account of life posits a notion of the good that should be pursued by the agent through the internal goods of his various practices. Practices, in MacIntyre's view (1986a, pp.74-75), are necessary but not always sufficient conditions for the intelligibility of actions. To explain this, I need to discuss further MacIntyre's account of action.

Action in "any full-blooded sense", MacIntyre holds, cannot be unintelligent. An unintelligent action is not an action. Neither can an action be an individual isolated one. An action is an action only in light of its relation to the agent's "antecedent states, relationships and transactions". The idea of an action without relation to a context is, he claims, a myth (1987b, pp.24-25). MacIntyre distinguishes an action from a body movement in that the former is purposeful and intentional. For instance, the act of nodding is an action when it is performed for some purposes that are socially recognized as related to that act, for instance for showing consent; otherwise, the nod might be a nervous tick that happens to the agent without him having particular purposes. Nodding as an action requires reasons; by contrast, a tick requires causes (1959a, p.89).

Other conditions apply, in MacIntyre's account, to render a purposeful action intelligible. An action should occur in a sequence of and in relation to other actions to become intelligible. Suppose that a person stands in front of you and nods without having any background relationship with you. The agent in this case might have purposes, but you cannot understand what his purpose or intention is due to lack of this background relationship. As contrasted with this, a student's action of nodding in a classroom to his teacher is intelligible, i.e. meaningful, and indicates that he is in agreement with the teacher, or that he has understood a point. As MacIntyre (1982a, p.664) puts it, "What makes a particular sequence of human actions intelligible or unintelligible is *both* its relationship to antecedent episodes and its present character."

Intelligibility, in MacIntyre's view, is an objective feature of actions, in the sense that others should acknowledge the intelligibility of an action, and "it is not in the eye of the beholder" (1986a, p.64); however, this makes it difficult to understand MacIntyre where he holds that some actions might seem unintelligible to others, while they are in fact intelligible, and *vice versa;* in other words, if intelligibility is an objective feature, how an action might be intelligible to the individual and not to others, and *vice versa.* This latter possibility gives a sense of subjectivity to the notion of intelligibility. due to ignorance or a mistake regarding the sequences of actions on the part of these observers (1986a, p.64).

An agent might rightly take his action as intelligible due to his knowledge of the sequences of actions in which this act has occurred; whereas the observers lack this knowledge, and so intelligibility here becomes subjective and in the eye of the beholder. In my view, we can distinguish between intelligibility to others and to the agent[44]; a distinction that does not appear in MacIntyre's work, as he holds "We become what others already took us to be" (1986a, p.64).[45] As opposed to this, we can imagine individuals who resist the kind of identity that others impose on them. I will return to this issue below.

The relation of an action to the agent's antecedent states and transactions, for MacIntyre, is not sufficient for rendering all actions intelligible, particularly those actions that happen in practices and contexts which are different from that of ordinary and routine life. MacIntyre's

---

[44] As will be explained below, this distinction does not mean that the intelligibility to the agent is in principle a private issue, and so it does not face Wittgensteinian private language problems.

[45] It seems that we can understand how MacIntyre might be able to explain the subjectivity of the notion of intelligibility in the sense explained above by appealing to this text where he writes that "we can only become the authors of intelligible action through making our own a kind of understanding and a certain set of judgments which were *originally* imposed upon us by others" (1986a, p.64) (Italics added). The term "originally" suggests that we might be able to revise later what others have imposed upon us; however, this interpretation, which lessens the difference between me and MacIntyre, requires a bit of change in MacIntyre's text, in particular, where he writes that intelligibility "is not in the eye of the beholder" (1986a, p.64). My argument presented in chapter 2 for defending that MacIntyre is not a conservative communitarian also supports this possible interpretation. I am also grateful for Lutz for his note on this point.

example for this is a person eating out of hunger the last member of a fruit-species in a research practice (1986a, p.73). This action is intelligible in the context of normal life, unlike in this research practice, because the action can be accounted for with good reasons in the former, but not in the latter case.

The limits of intelligibility, then, are the limits of the stock of good reasons that we can provide for an action, and what counts as a good reason depends on the context of particular practices that, based on their internal goods, determine what a good reason for acting is. The good reason should be recognized as such in the practice, and this would not be a matter of arbitrary or purely individual decision; as MacIntyre (1986a, pp.67-68) puts it:

> It is central to initiation and education into practices that we have to learn both what counts as a good reason for acting in one way rather than another and how to be guided by good reasons. To be good at whatever it is—architecture, say, or farming or geometry or chess—is to be guided towards the recognized goods of the particular practice by dispositions informed by right reasoning ...

All good reasons, thus, are good reasons in a particular context and practice, even when the agent cites these reasons to himself. The expression of desires and "wants", which in Anscombe's view does not even count as a piece of practical reasoning at all, for MacIntyre could serve as a reason in some contexts, for example, if a child eats the aforementioned fruit, his hunger would be an intelligible piece of practical reasoning (1986a, p.73). An important point here is that, MacIntyre (1986a, p.76) contends, an appeal to basic wants and needs in appropriate contexts counts as a good reason in any cultural order. The provision "any cultural order" is significant, as it provides a minimum basis for the evaluation of different cultures. To go intelligibly beyond these basic needs requires the context of a practice.

The limits of intelligibility, thus, are the limits of the good reasons that the agent can provide for his actions in a given culture at a specific stage of its development. The limits are not fixed, just as a poet can go beyond the

246

existing stock of vocabulary and expressions; however, the poet's utterances would be intelligible if he utters them in light of the practice of poetry so far. This practice, like other ones, is not a closed domain, and can indefinably extend, "albeit only stage by stage" (1986a, p.76).

Besides practices, and contexts at the level of practice, there is a larger framework that is essential for the intelligibility of some actions. This framework is a narrative which integrates an agent's different practices, his past events and memories into a single life. MacIntyre's example for this runs as follows. Suppose that X's wife has been tortured to death in a concentration camp. X goes to a supermarket for his shopping, and exchanges the same kind of friendly conversation with the owner that he is used to doing with other shopkeepers. All of a sudden, X recognizes in the supermarket's owner a guard who has served in the concentration camp where his wife has been tortured to death. MacIntyre holds that if X continues to have amiable conversations with the supermarket's owner, his action would be unintelligible due to the place of this agent in the tragic narrative of his life (1986a, p.74).

Practices and enacted narratives provide a public world in which there are public standards for intelligibility. The agent's inner life would be intelligible to him, if it has been constructed according to these public standards. Agents' private consciousness of their inner lives depends on their ability to interact socially with others in practices, and to understand and to recognize as true what others impute to them (1986a, p.74). Genuinely human consciousness is a consciousness that has been scrutinized by the consciousness of others, and thus it is necessarily embodied, despite the Platonist and Cartesian view (1986a, p.78).

As was remarked above, in MacIntyre's view, the intelligibility of an action lies in its relation to the agent's antecedent states and transactions among which are actions that stand in relation to further actions, such that "the intelligibility of an action derives ultimately from narrative continuities in the agent's life. The form of our understanding of intelligibility is therefore [a] narrative form" (1987b, pp.24-25). According to this narrative

247

understanding, an action becomes intelligible as a part of a story in the agent's life—a story with more or less coherence, which may encompass a greater or lesser part of his life (1987b, p.25).

MacIntyre (1981, p.216) holds that a human being is essentially a story-telling animal. He is not the author of his own stories; he enters into human society with one or more "imputed characters" which should be understood as a condition for maintaining interactions with others. A child learns the requirements of different characters and "the ways of the world" through stories. The kind of unity that a character has in a story provides the background for a personal identity. The empiricists such as Locke and Hume and contemporary analytical philosophers, MacIntyre (1981, p.217) states, have failed to notice this background of a personal identity. In this view, the person is what he is taken by others to be in the course of living out a story that runs from his birth to his death. Without this unity, and if a person's narrative does not belong to larger narratives, as J. R. Weinstein (2003, p.53) ascribes to MacIntyre, his life becomes meaningless and unintelligible to him, which occurs when his narrative loses its point and climax (1981, p.217).

MacIntyre's ideal of life, thus, is a unitary life as it is depicted in the life of a character in a story. This account makes the notions of narrative, intelligibility and accountability interdependent. A person who is the subject of an encompassing narrative is accountable for his actions and experiences which form the narrative, and if he could provide good reasons for his actions, they would be intelligible. All these three concepts, i.e. narrative, intelligibility and accountability, presuppose the notion of personal identity formed through narratives (1981, pp.217-218).

MacIntyre's narrative account runs against any philosophical or sociological view of the self that does not take it as essentially continuous through its different roles, or does not take actions as intrinsically belonging to a kind of narrative, or what takes a narrative as a form imposed by the agent on his absurd actions to make them intelligible (1987b, p.25).

248

An example of the first view referred to above, MacIntyre (1981, pp.204–205) holds, is Erving Goffman's sociological theory in which the self and his life are liquidized into the series of unconnected roles and episodes. The second view is represented by Sartre's existentialism and in the sociological theory of Ralf Dahrendorf, according to which the self is segregated from its roles. Besides these two kinds of theories, the tendency in analytical philosophy to analyse human actions and to think atomistically about them constitutes, in MacIntyre's view, a barrier against the narrative understanding of human life and human actions. MacIntyre states these views which are characteristic of modern thought and practice make the unity of human life invisible to us (1981, pp.204-205).

One salient feature of contemporary social life, in MacIntyre's view, is the compartmentalization of human roles; i.e. individual and social life has been partitioned into separate spheres such as home, workplace and consumption each of which has its own measures of success and failure, and requires particular habits for the effective pursuit of these roles. In such a view, "The self is distributed among a multiplicity of roles"; whereas for Aristotle or Hume, "virtues are attributes of the whole person" (1992a, p.195). As a result of this compartmentalization, MacIntyre ([1999b] 2006O, p.197) holds, individuals as they move between different independent roles dissolve into these roles, and there remains no external position from which they can scrutinize these roles and their requirements. This explains how MacIntyre thinks the modern self has lost its unitary feature by being dissolved into different roles and spheres.

MacIntyre favours the Aristotelian account of the virtues and of the self as opposed to the modern socio-philosophical views mentioned above, because the Aristotelian virtues assume a unitary life, and the virtues are expressed in a whole life in its entirety, not like professional skills in particular roles and areas of a life. A virtuous person, in the Aristotelian view, is expected to exhibit the same dispositions on different occasions on some of which they might not even be as efficient as professional skills (1981, p.205).

249

At this point, MacIntyre's discussion of intelligibility as narrative intelligibility relates to his account of the good as being objective. The Aristotelian account of the self paves the way for a narrative understanding of actions, because it is based on a notion of the good that consists in fulfilling human functions, and presents the good life as a single move toward the good; MacIntyre captures this point as follows.

> What is important is to recognize that each life is a single, if complex, narrative of a particular subject, someone whose life is a whole into which the different parts have to be integrated, so that the pursuit of the goods of home and family reinforces the pursuit of the goods of the workplace and vice versa, and so too with the other diverse goods of a particular life. To integrate them is a task, a task rarely, if ever, completed (2002, p.10).

The preceding remarks suffice to explain what MacIntyre's account of narrative intelligibility is, and how it relates to an overarching account of the good which informs the unity of this narrative. In what follows, I shall sketch further MacIntyre's account of the good in order to explain his underlying reasons for espousing Aristotelianism and Thomism, and will finally deliver my own criticism of his entire moral theory.

In my view, it is possible to find at least three accounts of the good in MacIntyre's work. The first one is an account of the good that is rooted in human nature. Human beings as the members of a natural kind have an essence that awaits actualization through the good life. In this Aristotelian view, moral precepts are instructions about "how to realize our true nature and reach our true end" (1981, p.52). This realization occurs by disciplining our desires and by cultivating those habits of action that ethics prescribes. This account of the good implies the existence of a state of affairs which should be realized as a result of the observance of morality; it is "human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-*realized-its-telos*" (1981, p.52).

The second account is the good in the sense of being in quest of the good, that is, "the good life for man is the life spent in seeking for the good life for man, and the virtues necessary for the seeking are those which will enable us to understand what more and what else the good life for man is"

(1981, p.219). This means that we are on a journey that does not have a specific destination beyond what is involved in the journey itself, and does not depend on a specific content of the good.

The third account is the good as a kind of happiness that is internal to an activity performed for the sake of its internal goods (1978, p.17), that is, "the state of being well and doing well in being well" (1981, p.148). In this account, the good is not something to be achieved in the future; rather, it lies in the way our whole life is structured.

I think, with MacIntyre's later metaphysical and Thomistic tendency (2007, p.xi), the first account of the good has dominated the two others, and directed them toward itself; as a result, being in search of the good or enjoying a well-structured life is not sufficient for human flourishing. In other words, according to MacIntyre's later approach good functions of practices and traditions are related to the fact that human beings are directed toward their specific ends set by their nature. MacIntyre makes this point in his 2007 prologue to *After Virtue*:

> I had now learned from Aquinas that my attempt to provide an account of the human good purely in social terms, in terms of practices, traditions, and the narrative unity of human lives, was bound to be inadequate until I had provided it with a metaphysical grounding. It is only because human beings have an end towards which they are directed by reason of their specific nature, that practices, traditions, and the like are able to function as they do (1981, p.xi).

This account of the good based on features of human nature gives unification to human life from the agent's birth to his death; as MacIntyre puts it:

> In what does the unity of an individual life consist? The answer is that its unity is the unity of a narrative embodied in a single life. To ask 'What is the good for me?' is to ask how best I might live out that unity and bring it to completion (1981, p.218).

251

The argument so far indicates that the good life for MacIntyre is a unified single life which is directed toward the good as the realization of the true essence of human beings. This unified life imparts intelligibility to human actions and life, because, as argued above, intelligibility requires the positioning of an action in the sequence of the agent's antecedent states and actions which necessarily continue to form a whole life. Also, intelligibility requires the formation of actions and their underlying intentions on the basis of socially and contextually recognized standards.

Despite MacIntyre's contention that the objectivity of the good is recognized only from specific perspectives that already presuppose that objectivity, and that it is not possible to vindicate it without a prior obligation to a perspective (1993, p.17), the best interpretation of his view is that, as F. Trifiró (2006, p.131) attributes to him, "objectivity in ethics is possible only within the Aristotelian scheme of moral reasoning and practice based on a functional conception of a human being as having an essential purpose, function or *telos*".

The socio-narrative intelligibility of actions and the objective good are two underlying reasons for MacIntyre's belief that modern morality is fragmented, and that the Aristotelian/Thomistic account of practical reason and morality is superior to their modern rivals. As I discussed in the foregoing chapter, this superiority, despite MacIntyre's claim, would not be acknowledged internally by these rival traditions, and it should be understood in light of MacIntyre's meta-ethical positions regarding the notions of intelligibility and the good.

My main criticism of MacIntyre's project, on the basis of which I will conclude this thesis, addresses these two meta-ethical positions. I shall start with MacIntyre's account of the intelligibility of actions, and then turn to his account of the objective good.

VI.2.1 A Criticism of MacIntyre's Account of the Intelligibility of Actions

In this section, I shall criticize two aspects of MacIntyre's account of intelligibility. The first aspect is his view, explained above, that "the intelligibility of an action derives ultimately from narrative continuities in the agent's life" (1987b, p.24). The second aspect is his view that intelligibility "is not in the eye of the beholder", and that it should be based on good reasons recognized as such by others (1986a, p.64).

With regard to the first point, in my view, the narrative account of intelligibility is neither necessary nor desirable for all actions. We do not need, and it is not always good, to place all our actions in the context of a narrative continuity to make them intelligible. I oppose MacIntyre's claim that "behaviour is only characterised adequately when we know what the longer and longest-term intentions are and how the shorter-term intentions are related to the longer" (1981, p.208). As J. B. Schneewind (1982, p.653) puts it, narrative continuity and story-telling are not necessary for intelligibility:

> It is not true that the only characterization of behaviour which is adequate to make it intelligible requires setting it in the frame of the "longest-term intentions" of the agent. We may adequately explain some movements by saying that the person is dancing a jig and we can explain what a jig is without telling a story; ... But the actions in which we do a dance or carry on a tradition need not themselves be explained by a narrative. An account of just what the dance is may suffice.

MacIntyre's response to Schneewind is along the lines that "his [Schneewind's] use of explain is very different from my [MacIntyre's] use of 'make intelligible'. For, someone's dancing a jig on a particular occasion is never intelligible just because his or her action falls under that description and that we understand what a jig is. Someone's dancing during a philosophical discussion is *prima facie* unintelligible" (1982a, p.664).

I agree with MacIntyre that actions need a context from which they derive their meaning and intelligibility, but this context does not need to be

253

as wide as a story or a whole human life. We do not need to take into account the relation of each action to its infinite antecedent actions. For instance, my act of pressing the keys on the keyboard becomes meaningful as an act of typing when we consider the whole function of a computer for a student. The intelligibility of this act is not dependent on my life stories or my longest-term intentions. My intention might be to spam people by sending fake emails to them, or to type a chapter of my thesis, for both of which the pressing of the keys would count as an intelligible act of typing.

These two intentions, to follow MacIntyre, are in fact related to my life's past stories. If I intend to spam, it is perhaps because I need money, and this is, in turn, related to what has happened to me that has rendered me poor. It is also related to the fact that I am not constrained by moral ideals which would rule this action out, which can further be explained in relation to the social and educational setting in which I have grown up, and this chain could endlessly continue.

A similar story can be told for my act of writing a piece of my thesis. This act is related to the past events in my life, which have directed me to become a student, then a student of philosophy, then to select a particular topic. None of these background stories are necessary for the intelligibility of my action. What is sufficient here is a socially recognized function such as typing, using an instrument known as a computer. My intentions do not contribute to my act becoming as an intelligible stance of typing, in so far as it complies with the general framework that is socially recognized as typing. If I trespass against that established framework, for instance by using my toes for pressing the keys, my action might not be regarded as typing proportionate with the degree it deviates from that recognized framework. The outward conformity of my actions to a socially recognized form of behaviour in appropriate contexts makes them intelligible in the eyes of others. These contexts, which are determined by conventions, do not need to take the shape of long-term intentions or stories, let alone of a narrative unity. We do not need, as MacIntyre (1981, p.212) thinks, to take actions as having a basically historical character; the act of typing has a history or

254

histories, but my position in this history is not required for the intelligibility of my action.

The action of a person who dances a jig in the middle of a philosophical discussion is unintelligible as it is unconventional; in this case, the reasons that would be offered by the person or guessed by us might be along the lines that he had been puzzled by a difficult issue in the discussion, or he has received unexpected exciting news, and these reasons suffice to render that action intelligible. There is no need to investigate his long-term intentions and why he has had difficulty in understanding that issue which has made him dance in an inappropriate context. There is no need for an appeal to a narrative unity for the intelligibility of an action, in so far as we can provide short or middle-range reasons for it.

I also think this appeal to a narrative unity is not always psychologically desirable. All people usually have bitter experiences in their lives, which they are better off forgetting. To insist on a unified life and story-telling as a feature of human beings might mean that we can never discard these experiences. The self is capable of breaking with a disturbing narrative in order to start a new story. On this basis, I think MacIntyre's point mentioned earlier regarding the unintelligibility of the cordial conversation of the man whose wife had been killed in a concentration camp is not compelling, because he may have decided to forget his past upsetting memories, and to forgive those people who have contributed to those events in order for him to lead a happier life. The emphasis on long-term intentions and past stories might cause obsessive patterns of thought and behaviour.

So far, I have argued that the narrative account of intelligibility is neither necessary nor always psychologically good. In what follows, I shall attend to the second aspect of my criticism of MacIntyre concerning his view that intelligibility is an objective feature, and in the eyes of others not in the individual's.

In my view, MacIntyre here has unduly dissolved the individual into the social. Our actions sometimes are unintelligible to others, in the sense

255

that whatever good reasons we offer for them they would not be acceptable to those outsiders, while they are intelligible to the agent himself.

The story of Noah and his ark is a good example for this. When Noah and his few supporters were building the ark on the basis of a belief in God and His decree, the majority of the people took their action to be unintelligible; as the Quran says, "And he [Noah] constructed the ship, and whenever an assembly of the eminent of his people passed by him, they ridiculed him. He said, 'If you ridicule us, then we will ridicule you just as you ridicule us'" (Quran, 11.38, Sahih International Translation). In fact, the construction of a ship in that geographical position was not thought by these people to be based on good reasons; but this was so because they did not have the background faith which was available to Noah and his supporters.

On similar grounds, the act of Abraham in breaking down the city's idols was not at all intelligible to the people, while it was intelligible to him against a background of monotheistic beliefs. It is true that Abraham appeals to the act of destroying which is socially recognized as a sign of protest in order to express his attitude; however, the application of this act to the idols was not socially intelligible. As a result, I think, intelligibility retains a significant degree of subjectivity, without entailing the existence of a private language. Thus, MacIntyre's claim that "We become what others already took us to be" is not warranted (1986a, p.64).

So far, in my criticism of MacIntyre's account of intelligibility, I have addressed two points, namely, I have argued that the intelligibility of actions does not depend on a narrative unity of intentions, and that intelligibility is not totally an objective feature of actions. The underlying principle which connects these two points together is that the locus of intelligibility and practical rationality lies or should lie in the individual.

The individual has the capacity to count what others think unintelligible as intelligible due to a backdrop of beliefs that is accessible only to him. He also has the capacity to break out of a long-term narrative to start a new course of actions based on intentions that might appear to be unintelligible from the point of view of that narrative; while they are

intelligible from his current perspective. If the agent shares his grounds for the intelligibility of this action, the reasonable public should be convinced of that intelligibility; however, as the public might not be conscious of that background, or not willing to accept it, it might not judge the action intelligible; nevertheless, the reasonable audience is expected to admit the intelligibility of the action if it is aware of the relevant background beliefs; accordingly, my argument here does not entail the existence of a private language. The individual communicates with the public on the basis of a shared language. As an example, the aforementioned man whose wife had been killed in the camp can quite reasonably expect to convince the public of the intelligibility of his cordial greeting with the former official, because this performance is based on the justifiable goodness of having a psychologically happy life which requires forgetting, to the extent that is possible, past painful narratives of life. This underlying ground is in principle mutually justifiable, though it might not be at first glance accessible to observers. Accordingly, my appeal to the individual here does not lead to having a private language, because the grounds of his reasoning are basically accessible to the reasonable public.

In order to support this claim about the self, according to which it is able to break its entangling narratives, I again appeal to Aquinas' account of the intellect which is endorsed by MacIntyre. The intellect, as was explained in chapter 3, becomes formally, and not materially, identical with objects in the knowledge-process. The intellect does not become the thing by absorbing its form; as a result, the intellect always retains a higher perspective from that of the object, and is not dissolved into its particular perspective. I used this argument in chapter 4, on behalf of MacIntyre, against the charge of perspectivism. Here, I intend to employ this argument against the narrative account of intelligibility offered by MacIntyre.

The Thomistic account of the intellect has individualistic aspects. The individual intellect, by the aid of other intellects, comes to perceive the world and form its own normative judgments based on the standards that it seeks to collectively justify; however the intellect and the self are not

257

passive constructs of the social. The view that we understand ourselves as others take us to be is more compatible with MacIntyre's earlier social approach than with his later metaphysical view. The point is that if we take human beings as possessing an essence that should be realized through their social and moral lives, or a nature that requires some norms for its normal functioning, it follows that they are not totally social creations; as T. R. Machan (1998, p.169) states the point:

> Thomism draws on Aristotle and thus affirms the role of the individual ethical agent, since Aquinas takes seriously the place of the individual's moral choice or initiative, as did Aristotle. As such, there appears to be no major opposition between the main thrust of Western Christianity and individualism, especially if one adds to this the distinctive Christian doctrine that every individual person is a child of God and has the responsibility to achieve everlasting salvation by his or her own chosen beliefs and perhaps deeds.

The point is not that the individual is free to choose the grounds of his identity or arguments, or that he should not be concerned with the public justification of his claims; rather, the point is that the individual is entitled to disagree with the group of which he is a member; nevertheless, he should believe that he would, in principle, be able to show the rationality of his dissenting position to others.

What the agent finds as good reasons, which form the basis of the intelligibility of his actions in his own eye, might be different from the point of view of the community, and so the agent is not necessarily what the community takes him to be. In order to avoid the private language implication, I again insist that the individual should hold that his beliefs are rationally justifiable to a reasonable audience.

Despite MacIntyre's view that the individual is not a substantial moral agent, that is to say, we cannot articulate a morality for him without taking into account his place in a social and cultural setting (1983a, p.454), the position that is required by his interpretation of the natural law tradition is that the individual by nature has an inclination toward a particular kind of morality, though this inclination needs a particular social and cultural

258

context for its cultivation. So my evaluation is that MacIntyre in his treatment of the notion of intelligibility unduly dissolves the individual into the community or into his past narrative unity. The passage below from MacIntyre, which presents the notion of the individual as a modern linguistic innovation, reveals his attitude.

> The classical view begins with the community of the *polis* and with the individual viewed as having no moral identity apart from the communities of kinship and citizenship; ... the word "individual," used as I have been using it, is itself a linguistic innovation in the period which marks the origins of modern morality. Until the seventeenth century the word "individual" is almost exclusively a technical term of logic, contrasted with the word "class," ... (1978, p.23).

This approach reflects MacIntyre's earlier social teleology according to which the identity of a human being is the identity of a character in a story with a single life through that story; an identity which is constructed in the eyes of others; as he put it, "I am what I may justifiably be taken by others to be in the course of living out a story that runs from my birth to my death" (1981, p.217).

This view is also indebted to Marx's account as, for instance, is reflected in his 6th thesis in *Theses on Feuerbach* in which he states "... the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations".

MacIntyre endorses Marx's criticism of Feuerbach, as the latter takes the individual as abstract from social relationships; MacIntyre rejects the view that "the human essence must be specifiable by reference only to properties possessed by individuals apart from and in independence of their social relationships" ([1994]1998a, p.228). MacIntyre would struggle to make this social/Marxist view compatible with Aquinas's account of the self and with his own account of the natural law tradition. The appeal to human nature in the natural law tradition requires believing that human beings' main cognitive and normative capacity is an asset that already exists within them, which needs the proper conditions to flourish. As Aquinas (*ST*, I-II, Q.94, Art.6) contends, the knowledge of the primary precepts of the natural

259

law "can nowise be blotted out from men's hearts"; only sin can abolish this knowledge in particular cases, and not universally. It is not clear to me at all how this notion of men or human beings would be different from the notion of the individual who MacIntyre so severely criticizes and presents as a modern moral innovation.

The individual so understood is not necessarily an egoistic entity who faces the problem of rational justification for other-regarding morality. The nature of this individualistic good is such that its appropriate development requires social relationships and fellow-feeling. These social relationships, however, are not to the extent that, as it is the case in the Aristotelian account of virtue-ethics, agents do not know the virtues independently of the wisdom of the wise. In this view, only the man of *phronesis* is able to determine the mean point and thus the virtues.

In this section, I argued that MacIntyre faces a consistency problem between his account of intelligibility and his account of the natural law tradition according to which moral precepts direct the agent toward his true essence. MacIntyre's account of the intelligibility of actions liquefies the identity of the individual into the narrative unity of his past events, or into what the community interprets and takes him to be. As MacIntyre (1986a, pp.67-68) stated, the range of intelligibility is the range of good reasons that the individual can provide; but in my view, the individual can differ from the community in what he takes to be good reasons and so in what he takes to be intelligible. The identity of the individual is not totally as a social creature, and so he has a cognitive or normative capacity to resist intelligibly the moral judgments of the community, and to maintain that his own view is rationally superior to that of the community to which he belongs. In fact, MacIntyre himself confirms that the individual has the capacity to transcend the community, and he would thus enforce the criticism that I made above; as MacIntyre puts it:

> Notice also that the fact that the self has to find its moral identity in and through its membership in communities such as those of the family, the neighborhood, the city and the tribe does not entail that the self has to accept the moral

limitations of the particularity of those forms of community
(1981, p.221).

As a result, the narrative understanding of intelligibility, which insists on a single and unified life as a condition of the intelligibility of human actions, is neither required nor psychologically always good for the individual. The narrative understanding might be necessary for the intelligibility of our entire life as a whole, but not for individual actions which occur in our life. Our individual actions will be intelligible in the eyes of others if they comply with socially recognized trends. A limited context that contains the individual's proximate intentions would be sufficient for the intelligibility or unintelligibility of his actions, both in his and others' view. Accordingly, there remains much space for an individual to assess the intelligibility of his actions apart from his own past narratives or from his community.

If it is the case that this narrative understanding of intelligibility, as espoused by MacIntyre, is not a necessary condition for the intelligibility of actions, then one of MacIntyre's implicit reasons for taking Aristotelianism and Thomism to be superior to their rivals, and for taking modern morality to be fragmented would founder, because we can make our moral evaluations and actions intelligible without holding to a narrative picture of human life. This was my first criticism of MacIntyre; in the next section, I shall discuss and criticize his view that the notion of the human good is necessary for morality. Just as proximate intentions can intelligibly explain actions, proximate goods can justify morality; in other words, despite MacIntyre's claim, the justification of morality does not need to be based on the human final *telos*.

VI.3 The Justification of Morality Based on Human Vulnerability

The basic thrust of this chapter has been to challenge MacIntyre's meta-ethical positions which underlie his support for the superiority of Aristotelianism and Thomism. In the previous section, I addressed one of these positions, namely, a narrative understanding of the notion of

261

intelligibility. This understanding is best fulfilled in an Aristotelian and Thomistic moral scheme due to the fact that an overriding notion of the good allows for a single and unified life, and thus for a narrative unity and a narrative intelligibility.

In this section, I shall argue that the justification of the precepts of morality does not need to be based on the human final *telos*. If I show this, MacIntyre's claim that modern morality is a fragmented version of the classical scheme, and so is bereft of rational justification, would be called into question.

I argued above that we can at least find three accounts of the good in MacIntyre's work, namely, the good as the realization of the human essence, the good as being in an enduring search for the good, and the good as being well and doing well in being well which is the life of the virtues. I also stated that the first account based on the human *telos* is the dominant view of the good in MacIntyre's later work.

Based on the first account, and in line with the third account, MacIntyre claims that "the exercise of the virtues is itself a crucial component of the good life for man" (1981, p.184); however, what the first account adds to the third one is the role of human essence and *telos* in determining what counts as a virtue; as MacIntyre (1981, p.184) puts the point approvingly from Aristotle's view, "It is the *telos* of man as a species which determines what human qualities are virtues." The human ultimate good orders human heterogeneous goods into a complex unity, and "contributes to the complex unity of the kind of life that it is good and best for human beings to pursue" (1998c, p.98).

In this section, I seek to argue that we can have an account of morality, which can to a great extent regulate our relationships to each other, without introducing the contested notion of the human *telos*, and needing a complex unity of human life.

My argument here rests on a distinction between the two notions of morality and ethics. By ethics I mean what MacIntyre has in mind when he speaks of morality which in his view needs the notion of the human good

262

for its justification. His account of morality, as explained above, depends on a unified picture of human life in which different stages of a human life should be connected to each other on the basis of an ultimate good. The morality of actions in this scheme derives from the contribution of the actions in bringing about the good and the best. I call this account of morality, which is based on an ultimate good, ethics.

Ethics, despite the intentions of its proponents, is inevitably particularistic and related to particular traditions. The reason for this is that ethics concerns the good of which there are different accounts in different traditions, or indeed, in a single tradition that experiences value-pluralism. Ethics is thus loaded with local values which may include metaphysical and theological claims.

By morality, as distinct from ethics, I mean the principles and also the virtues that are justified by appeal to basic goods, and not to the ultimate good, and that are justifiable to any reasonable agent, as will be explained below.

If we admit that simplicity is a merit for a theory, then a moral theory that can justify our moral obligations with less complexity should be preferred to a more complicated moral justification. The content of the ultimate good, even in Aquinas' and MacIntyre's view, is not accessible to secular reason. In their views, what secular reason can ultimately take us to know regarding the ultimate good is that no finite object can fully satisfy our desires; reason cannot go beyond this to specify the nature of our friendship with God as our ultimate good which is to be achieved through faith and a life of hope and charity (2009a, p.75). Accordingly, the ultimate good—which directs and supplements the goods of family, political and community life—has a theological aspect which can function as the basis of a community-based ethics.

Recall that one of the predicaments of contemporary life in MacIntyre's view is the fact that philosophical arguments have become sterile and interminable due to an unrestricted pluralism and a lack of agreement on the notion of the good (1981, p.11). One problem regarding

263

the practicability of MacIntyre's alternative concerns how we can arrive at a shared account of the human *telos* from this fragmented and pluralistic state.

MacIntyre's response to this question is that we should not expect to accomplish this task *via* philosophical argumentation; in his view, "The philosophy of the virtues has to be transformed into a politics of the virtues" (1990c, p.248). His point is that the required agreement on the virtues can be achieved in the shared life of small local communities in which the people have shared beliefs and similar life-styles, and not through philosophical arguments. Practical habituations in these communities foster the virtues in the lives of individuals, which then render theoretical education effective; as MacIntyre puts it from Aquinas' perspective, "intellectual instruction concerning the virtues is only effective with those who already to some significant degree possess them" (1998c, p.100).

One difficulty for this view is its impracticability. It would be almost impossible to convince modern people to return to life in small communities. Even if they go back to such a life, they will take with them their modern communication tools such as computers or cell phones which are probably connected to the internet. Instead of undergoing educational and character transformation, they are likely to prefer surfing the internet or connecting to social networks. Accordingly, MacIntyre's moral theory, while it contains many insights, is not practicable under modern conditions. Besides, another problem pertains to the relation between habit-informed character and the human *telos*. There are, surely, various habitual schemes in different cultures, leading to different habits for people. If we define the good and the right in terms of these habits, we would face a pluralism that might indeed support some ways of life that are undoubtedly oppressive; accordingly, we need some minimal principles to apply to all these habitual schemes to ascertain their compatibility with basic human moral values which hold true for all human beings. In other words, what we become habituated to is not necessarily good for us.

In MacIntyre's account, happiness as our final end is more than the exercise of the virtues, and consists in the development of all "our powers",

but he notes, "the actualization of our higher powers depends on and presupposes the actualization of our lower powers" (1998c, p.100). These lower powers form a minimum threshold the proper provision of which all reasonable ethical schemes should observe; but what are these lower powers which can provide the basis of morality?

Let me start with some suggestions made by MacIntyre himself. MacIntyre, in his lecture on *Having Survived Academic Moral Philosophy* (2009c), holds that there are indeed many different ways in which human beings may lead a good life, but the following sets of goods are necessary for any human being if he wants to flourish:

1-Nutritive needs, clothing, shelter, physical exercise, education, the opportunity to work, without which no one can adequately develop his physical, intellectual, aesthetic and moral powers.

2-Affectionate relationships, support from and critical interaction with family, friends and colleagues.

3-Institutional framework for providing security and stability over time without which long-term planning and association would be impossible

4-The powers of practical rationality, self-knowledge, communication and enquiry for individuals to become independent rational agents. Any life that is defective in one of these goods is less choice-worthy, in MacIntyre's terms (MacIntyre, 2009c).

These sets of goods are, in MacIntyre's view, the minimum goods which make a life a distinctively human life. This account is strictly secular, as there is no reference in it to union with God, which in his account is the complete sense of happiness.

VI.3.1 Introducing the Notion of Human Vulnerability as a Basis for Morality

I seek to propose my account of morality, as distinct from ethics, on a basis similar to what MacIntyre presented above. In my account, morality is a set of regulations that deals with human beings' basic needs and goods like the ones cited by MacIntyre in his lecture. The failure to satisfy these

goods makes human beings vulnerable, such that they would not be able to lead a human life. Accordingly, human nature is vulnerable in the sense that if someone becomes deprived of the basic goods, which MacIntyre also referred to above, not only cannot he normally lead a distinctively human life, which is a life of intellectual activity, practical rationality and self-fulfillment, his survival as an animal might also be endangered.

Vulnerability applies both to our animality and our humanity. We need some goods, like food, shelter, and clothing, *qua* animals; we need also some goods as rational beings, for instance, the good of having self-esteem, participation in our political and social life, which are required by our intellectual aspect, the lack of which generates subtler forms of vulnerability than do the goods related to our animality. I use here the notion of vulnerability both in the sense of being open to vulnerability, and actually undergoing suffering which in turn might subject the agent to other kinds and degrees of vulnerability.

A question arises here regarding the clarity of the notion of need which I am using in this vulnerability approach. Obviously, our notion of human need changes and evolves through time. What basic human needs are varies between cultures and periods of time. As L. Doyal and L. Gough (1984, p.7) have stated, "Many Marxists argue that needs are merely social constructions internal to any particular society." The consumer society and the welfare state by offering services and multiple options to people create expectations in them, which gradually become their needs such that not satisfying these needs makes the people's life difficult. MacIntyre ([1959] 2008, p.97) also from his Marxist perspective holds that in a capitalist system "The satisfaction of real human need disappears as a purpose", because the people are "in the grip of a system which makes their labour-power into a commodity, which needs their labour to produce as the system demands and their consumer power to buy as the system demands." MacIntyre holds, as was noted in the previous chapter, what we desire and want are not just biological features; they are an "intelligible response to

266

what we are offered". Therefore, it is to some degree undeniable that human needs are shaped by the socio-economic system in which people are living.

Accordingly, it would be difficult to deny that the notion of need is culture- or even individual-relative. L. Doyal and L. Gough (1984, p.14) refer to Runciman's study (1966) as arguing that "groups which are viewed by others as deprived may not agree and may even resent the suggestion that they are." If the notion of human needs or even basic human needs is a relative notion, it would be a serious blow to my approach here, because I have tried to use the notion of basic human needs as a platform for formulating a universal morality. I, however, attempt to offer an answer to this challenge based on a distinction between the two notions of needs and wants as follows.

The two notions of need and want are conceptually distinct from each other, such that it is always possible to ask about what we want or desire whether we really need it. In some circumstances, as MacIntyre thinks is the case concerning capitalistic and consumer society, this distinction becomes blurred in such a way that individuals do not deliberate whether their wants satisfy their real needs, or whether, in fact, we have real needs independently of our desires and wants.

I share the Aristotelian-Thomistic insight regarding the distinction between human beings' desires and good. This is also the point that MacIntyre has much emphasized in his virtue-ethics. However, I think that we do not need a notion of human beings' final good to maintain this distinction. We can draw this distinction by using a mechanism that is based on human beings' normal and desirable functioning which is distinct from the notion of human flourishing. Based on this, a desire is a need, or a real need, if its satisfaction contributes to the individual's and his community's normal and desirable functioning. The more something contributes to our normal and desirable functioning, the more basic a need it would be for us. The individual needs food and shelter for his normal life, but the need for food and shelter might be satisfied in different ways in different cultures; in some cases this satisfaction might become luxurious, which then goes

further than meeting basic needs. Accordingly, a demarcation mechanism regarding the need/wants distinction is whether the dissatisfaction of a desire would impair the normal and desirable performance of the individual and the community to which he belongs. For instance, I might have a strong desire to smoke, but as not smoking not only does not harm me and my community's performance, but it also improves our performance and conditions in the long-run, we can conclude that smoking is not a need or rather a real need. I as a human being might need an automobile which facilitates my life; but I do not need to have the most expensive one on the market even if I desire to have it. Indeed, in some contexts a transport system as simple as a donkey might suit the needs of the people better than does a modern automobile. This demarcation mechanism needs to be backed also by other people's judgment to correct us if we are mistaken.

Thus, although the society and the economic system surely infuse in us some feelings of need, we can employ the mechanism mentioned above to see if and how much of these are real needs. My assumption here is that the notion of normal functioning, though it is a normative concept, is to a significant degree the same across cultures, though it has the flexibility to allow that a need be satiated in different ways in different cultures. This assumption itself rests upon the view that human beings as the members of a species enjoy a lot of similarities with respect to their vulnerabilities and what they need to live normally, though the forms in which they satisfy these needs vary between cultures. Whatever our accounts of the good life, we can attempt to find some moral values that are respected in different ethical schemes. If we try to regulate our relationships based on these shared norms in conditions of ethical pluralism, we can solve some of our moral disputes and, at least, manage peacefully cases that resist solution.

Accordingly, what changes between cultures is more a matter of our desires, expectations and wants, rather than our basic needs. This is not to say that there is a fixed list of human basic needs through history. We might find new needs and things that satisfy them through time; for instance, having access to the internet, to the extent that it facilitates our

268

communications and research practices, might now count as a genuine need; rather, my point is that the identification of genuine and basic needs is not totally culture-relative. This identification follows a logic, that is, the contribution to human normal and desirable functioning for which there are objective measures due to significant similarities in human beings' natures. Human normal and desirable functioning does not rely on any particular view of human essence and *telos*; it is independent of, or better to say, it is presupposed by all reasonable accounts of human flourishing.

Without intending to draw a ranking order among different human goods, it is possible to divide these goods, the lack of which amounts to human deprivation, into two general groups: 1-The goods which address human beings' animal aspect; that is to say, the goods and needs which we share with other animals, such as the need for nutrition and shelter.2-The goods which address human beings' intellectual aspect; for instance, the need to be treated fairly and not arbitrarily, and having our curiosity addressed. Basic intellectual goods can be summarized by what R. Forst (2007 [2011], p.3) calls "a basic moral right to justification" by which he means human beings as "justificatory beings" demand reasons for what they are obliged to do or to believe. In other words, human beings normally demand or should demand reasons for decisions and regulations that affect them. The failure to satisfy the intellectual requirement of human beings amounts to human vulnerability in the two following senses. Again note here that I use the notion of vulnerability both in the sense of being open to vulnerability, and actually undergoing suffering which in turn might subject the agent to other kinds and degrees of vulnerability.

1-The fact that human beings as reason-demanding and justificatory beings do not receive convincing reasons regarding the moral system under which they live makes them frustrated and feel dominated. Human beings are entitled to reasonable justification for what they are obliged to do, and for the system under which they live. Human beings need moral respect, and to be treated as a rational and reasonable being capable of giving and receiving reasons. If human beings are subjected to norms that are not

justifiable to them, this would cause a sense of exclusion in them, diminishing them from the intellectual status of receiving, evaluating and giving reasons. This situation would deprive human beings of the opportunity to exercise their intellectual capacity for reflection on their circumstances, and this deprivation and the subsequent sense of exclusion *per se* constitute a form of vulnerability.[46] Human beings in these conditions would be vulnerable as they are denied the opportunity to exercise and develop their intellectual capacity. This makes them deprived and vulnerable regardless of the consequences that might follow from this state, which in turn strengthen this vulnerability. These consequences make the second sense of vulnerability, as is explained below.

2-The failure to treat others as moral and reasonable beings, who have a right to justification, excludes them from those decision-making procedures which should be conducted collectively. This makes this process a partial and inefficient one which then affects the well-being of the people who are subject to that process. Accordingly, not treating others as reasonable and reason-seeking beings causes material deprivation besides the kind of vulnerability mentioned above. When some people are excluded from the decision-making process, their interests normally are not taken into account, which impacts negatively on their well-being.

The intellectual aspect of human beings, which applies to them irrespective of their traditions and social roles, requires that they be immune to arbitrary individual preferences in their social and political relationships; they have a right to the justification of their social and political setting based on good reasons which are acceptable to reasonable people. A main feature of good reasons is that they embody the idea that human beings irrespective of their notions of the good enjoy inherent dignity; accordingly, a good reason respects this dignity in the best way possible.

---

[46] I should note that this state is different from the one in which individuals have good reasons to abide by the judgments of a wise person or a moral example. What is important here is that the individuals in this case have good reasons for their obedience, and it is not arbitrary.

270

It might be objected that for the most of our history our ancestors have not realized their right to justification, and that even in modern times there is no procedure that can satisfy fully this right. In answer, I would say even if this has been the case, not only does not it affect my argument, but rather it strengthens it. The most fatal events in the past century, that is, the two world wars, besides other destructive conflicts can be explained in terms of breaking the chain of good reasons by some people on the basis of beliefs about the superiority of a particular race, religion, nationality, etc., or on the basis of some individual or sectarian ambitions. When a group of people is deprived of their right to justification regarding what affects them, they would be prone to vulnerability, even if they are directed by a benevolent patriarch. The inclusive knowledge that is required to address various needs of different individuals does not obtain without the participation of different groups and individuals, that is, without a recognition of their justificatory rights.

J. Nickel (1987) has raised a similar objection, doubting in that "there is sufficient agreement worldwide to support anything like the full range of rights declared in contemporary manifestos." Not all moralities, Nickel holds, condemn racial discrimination or respect freedom of conscience (cited in M. Freeman (1994, p.493)).

MacIntyre himself has a similar objection to the idea of human rights as has been defended by A. Gewirth, arguing that individuals having entitlements such as rights presupposes the existence of some social institutions and practices which "only come into existence at particular historical periods under particular social circumstances" (1981, p.67). These institutions and social roles are required for the intelligibility of right-possession. In the absence of these social institutions and practices, "a claim to a right would be like presenting a check for payment in a social order that lacked the institution of money" (1981, p.67).

Two points are worth mentioning in response to this kind of objection. The first is in line with the point I made above, that is, my vulnerability approach, as a theory to justify a minimum of morality and rights for human

271

beings *qua* human beings, like most theories in this context, is normative and evaluative, and not just descriptive. In other words, these theories do not seek to state that people in societies as a matter of fact value these norms; rather, these theories posit some ideals for human beings and their associations that are to their good. Based on this, the point is not that all societies, in fact, value freedom of conscience or other rights, but that it is better for them to value this norm due to the fact that human beings have intellectual capacities which should be satisfied, in part, by offering them good reasons for what affects them. This normative approach provides us with a higher perspective to evaluate existing value systems in different traditions. Based on this, we can respond to MacIntyre that societies which lack right-institutions should strive to gradually construct them, as these rights ensure human beings' normal and desirable functioning.

The second point is that even if a given tradition or a community in some particular circumstances or stages of its development cannot acknowledge some norms such as the freedom of conscience, for example, by prioritizing some community and security-based norms over it, it should justify this practice to its subjects based on good reasons that can be objectively justified. In other words, the denial of this norm, which is strongly tied to human beings' intellectual aspect, should be justified from a higher perspective based on good reasons which take into account human basic goods and adhere to human beings' inherent dignity independently of their accounts of the good.

To return to my main argument, any account of the human good should meet the threshold of basic human goods which addresses human beings' animal and intellectual aspects as briefly sketched above. This condition addresses the morality of the good, as contrasted above with ethics. An account of the good life that does not take into account the basic goods and the intellectual needs of people fails to be moral.

If the main features of human beings which distinguish them from other animals are their ability to think and reflect on their own lives, then any adequate account of the good should satisfy this reflective capacity of

those people who are affected by it. This satisfaction happens by providing good shareable reasons to the affected subjects. But what counts as a good reason?

The answer to this question takes us back to MacIntyre's main ideas presented in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, namely, the idea that there are different accounts of practical rationality in different traditions, which means what counts as a good and shareable reason depends on a background of beliefs and a structure of practical rationality in a tradition; however, this view does not entail that there are no general requirements independent of different traditions regarding what counts as a good reason. The same answer can be offered to MacIntyre's virtue-ethics according to which rationality requires the possession of some virtues of thought and character. Based on this position, it is held that we cannot speak of a good reason for someone independently of the quality of his character.

I do not deny that what a good reason is, to a significant degree, depends on a backdrop of beliefs in a tradition and on the personality of the people, provided that minimum requirements of morality is met; that is to say, the requirements of our animal and human aspects should be addressed. The fact that we need some goods to survive and function normally, and that we as rational beings with inherent human dignity need justification and good reasons for what is proposed to us sets some limits to what can be offered as good or reasonable in different traditions. In other words, basic features of our animality and intellectuality apply to human beings across traditions, and thus provide some transcending measures for the evaluation of these traditions. The observance of these goods also is a measure of having a good character.

To recall, in my discussion of relativism in chapter 4, I argued that MacIntyre cannot dismiss adequately this charge unless he appeals to some basic shared measures of rationality. By these measures, I hope it has now become clear that I mean the fulfillment of basic goods as outlined above. A tradition, whatever its account of the good, that neglects these basic goods is

273

inadequate. The following historical event might shed some light on this claim.

The New York Times (August 17, 2000) reports the Taliban as shutting the bakeries that were run by poor widows, allegedly citing Islamic *Sharia* law, holding that women do not have the right to work. The report states that "From within one bakery in the war-ruined capital women screamed abuse. 'Give me poison and give my five children poison, then we will die fast instead of a slow death from starving and shame', one woman yelled."[47]

This report depicts well the vulnerability approach I am defending. According to the Taliban's notion of the good, the women do not have the right to work. As this account of the good, and its associated ethics, neglects human vulnerability we have compelling reasons to dismiss it. This account of the good addresses neither human beings' animal nor their intellectual aspects. Their animal aspect is not respected, because without the right to work the widows in these circumstances cannot satisfy their basic subsistence needs. Their intellectual aspect is not respected, because the widows are deprived of the right to work in conditions in which there is no remedy for them; a claim that cannot be justified to them, and they have intelligible reasons for opposing that social order on the grounds that it deprives them of their basic rights to a decent life. There is, in other words, no compelling response on the part of the Taliban to the question why a most vulnerable portion of the population is denied the right to waged work in the absence of any alternative social and political protection. If the Taliban answers that this order is based on God's commands, and so requires absolute submission, I would reply that God, as a reasonable and rational entity as will be explained further in the final conclusion to the thesis, would allow that His own decrees be adjusted to the requirements of the time, which is necessary for the main objective of these decrees, that is, human beings' happiness.

---

[47] I owe this example to Shrader-Frechette (2002).

There are commonalities between this vulnerability approach and the capability approach defended by some thinkers like A. Sen and M. Nussbaum. The main similarity is that both emphasize the existence of some basic functioning and capabilities for individuals to achieve. For instance, I can use the capability approach with respect to the Afghan women in the above example to argue that it is not justified to withhold from the widows the opportunity to work while they have the capacity to work; however, I avoid using this approach here because it might be argued that different traditions and cultures differ in terms of the capacities they allow to flourish, and the extent to which they allow different capacities to be realized. I prefer the vulnerability approach, because it rests on the most basic human capacities that characterize human beings as reason-giving and reason-demanding beings. These basic human capacities provide some minimum context-independent measures of rationality and justice which can be used to evaluate normative judgments made in different traditions.

Accordingly, human vulnerability provides a shared and external perspective for the evaluation and modification of different ethical traditions. This method would save us from the charge of relativism and perspectivism; whereas MacIntyre's method outlined in chapter 4 in which he emphasized the evaluation of traditions on the basis of their internal measures approaches an internalism which, despite MacIntyre's intentions, does not get round the problem of relativism.

The kind of pluralism that pertains to the notion of the good and is criticized by MacIntyre would be harmless if it lies beyond the realm of basic goods; in other words, the plurality of our final goods can be accommodated and lived with if they treat well human beings' animal and intellectual aspects.

We can try to resolve the tensions between different accounts of the good and their associated ethics in terms of their internal consistency and intellectual adequacy; however, firstly, we should not expect to accomplish very much in this endeavour; secondly, the inability to settle ethical disputes should not be considered as a catastrophe, as MacIntyre (1981, pp.6-7)

275

thinks. The value-incommensurability that MacIntyre ascribes to modern morality and criticizes would be a harmless phenomenon if all these conflicting values do justice concerning the vulnerability of those affected and their position as intellectual beings. Even if we accept MacIntyre's claim about the intractable pluralism in modern morality, which is a result of the lack of agreement on the notion of the good and the common good, we yet have some procedures for decision-making in line with the principles of morality, that is, respecting the animal and intellectual needs of human beings as possessing intrinsic dignity. These procedures let us handle morally our intellectual differences with regard to the notion of the good.

This attitude works both between and within traditions. Its function between different ethical traditions is to arrange the relationship between the people who have different accounts of the good through securing basic protection against vulnerability by addressing their animal and intellectual needs. It also works within traditions in order to protect minorities who have an account of the good different from the established one in a given society. Access to clean water, good nourishment, hygiene, decent work, education, and welfare opportunities in a society should not be on the basis of endorsing a particular view of the good. The distribution of all these resources should be based on good reasons as outlined earlier, that is, reasons that can be justified generally in a discursive dialogue with those who are affected by them.

Rationality requires us to pursue effectively our account of the good. Reasonableness, by contrast, requires considering the contingent nature of our account of the good. The fact that we have a notion of the good, most of the time, is due to the fact that we have been born into and grown up in a particular community. This, then, requires us to take into account the conditions of those people who are different from us in terms of sex, language, race, colour, religion, etc., but share with us the reflective capacity of demanding and weighing reasons. Accordingly, the notion of reasonableness relates to the vulnerability approach, and sets some limits on the notion of rationality.

276

Let me clarify further my account of morality by giving an example. Suppose that a number of passengers of different sexes, ages, races, and religions are on a coach which is travelling in a desert. The coach faces a technical problem 10 km from its destination such that it cannot take all the passengers, and it should reduce its load in order to be able to continue moving. What is the most reasonable and moral way of choosing those passengers who should be left off?

In my account, a reasonable and moral decision is a reciprocally and generally justifiable decision; that is to say, it is based on good reasons, which are non-arbitrary and relevant reasons; reasons that respect human dignity by addressing the animal and intellectual needs of those affected, without which human beings would be subject to affliction and vulnerability. These good reasons hold true independently of subjective and partisan preferences. Based on this description, if I hold that Muslim or Jewish or Christian passengers on the coach in the above example should get off, or that those with coloured skin should vacate the coach, or that my relatives should remain on board, I am in fact treating them immorally on a basis that cannot be reasonably justified, because there is no defendable relationship between religion or colour, on the one hand, and the burden of walking a relatively long distance; whereas, if we hold that sick or aged passengers remain on board we have made a decision on a good justifiable ground, as there is undeniable relationship between these measures and the suffering that will be caused by walking; in fact, in the latter case we are taking human vulnerability into account, which informs a mutually justifiable process of reasoning.

There is an implicit normative premise based on human intrinsic dignity in this line of reasoning. That human beings suffer from some issues is a factual proposition which *per se* cannot generate an evaluative proposition. In the above example, the fact that walking a long distance inflicts suffering upon people, particularly upon the aged or the disabled, does not in itself mean that they should be treated in proportion to their vulnerability, i.e. without considerations of their proximity to us, religion,

277

etc. The normative premise that mediates here is the basic assumption that human beings possess intrinsic dignity independently of their accounts of the good and ethical perspectives. Accordingly, the general form of the argument would be as follows.

(1) There are some basic physiological and intellectual goods for human beings the lack of which, as a matter of fact, deprives them of a decent human life. This statement is a factual statement enjoined with the following normative statement would yield the kind of moral universalism that I seek to justify.

(2) Human beings irrespective of their accounts of the good and their other attachments possess intrinsic dignity. This is my basic assumption for which I cannot argue further on the present occasion.

(3) Human dignity requires the fulfillment of, at least, the basic goods of human beings including the needs they have according to their animal and intellectual aspects. Those people, like the disabled or the sick, who are in a more pressing need than others deserve more attention than do others due to this dignity, because if their more severely felt needs were not satisfied, it would do more harm to their dignity than it would when less severely felt needs are not addressed.

(4) Thus, the basic animal/physiological and intellectual needs of human beings should be addressed independently of their accounts of the good and their relationships with us, and in proportion to their vulnerability, as they possess the dignity that is the source of this requirement independently of these features.

In sum, human beings have a basic right to the fulfillment of their basic needs such as the needs of subsistence, security, stability, employment, housing, etc. In addition, they have a right to justification of what affects them, required by their intellectual capacity. They have a right to be treated on the basis of good reasons which are shareable reasons. A main feature of good reasons which are justifiable to any reasonable person is that they consider the dignity of human beings, which requires the non-discriminatory treatment of human beings in the area of basic needs. In the next section, I

278

shall discuss some of MacIntyre's possible objections to my approach, in the course of which I try to explain my view further.

VI.3.2 Considering MacIntyre's Objections to the Vulnerability Approach

One possible objection that MacIntyre might offer would be that since I am appealing to the notion of basic human needs independently of people's accounts of the good or the traditions to which they belong, I am considering human beings without any culture and as merely biological animals, but man without a culture is a myth; as MacIntyre puts the point:

> [It might be claimed that] the standard of utility or pleasure is set by man qua animal, man prior to and without any particular culture. But man without culture is a myth. Our biological nature certainly places constraints on all cultural possibility; but man who has nothing but a biological nature is a creature of whom we know nothing (1981, p.162).

In response, I would say that I am not considering human beings as only biological creatures without any cultural elements; rather, my point is that any human culture which we can imagine, in so far as it is a human culture, should admit that its judgments should be based on good reasons which are justifiable to any reasonable person who is affected by them. What counts as a good reason is not entirely up to cultures; rather, the animality and intellectuality aspects of human beings pose some restriction independent of these cultures on the ranges of good reasons, as is clear in the Taliban example mentioned above. Facts about human vulnerability, and that human beings require good shareable reasons are to a significant degree independent of different traditions; but this independence does not imply the existence of people without culture. In other words, the sustained normal and desirable functioning of human beings requires the regulations that govern their interactions be justifiable to them. This justifiability is not a criterion-less subjective issue up to personal preferences or to cultures. A piece of moral reasoning is a good and justifiable piece of reasoning if it traces the relevant moral facts at stake. This relevance is recognized by holding that all human beings enjoy equal dignity, and then seeing which

279

option treats the affected human beings better irrespective of irrelevant factors; for instance, in the coach example above, if I decide that my mother *qua* my mother remains on board, I am not thinking on a good justifiable basis, because if someone asks me why my mother deserves this particular attention, I do not have any answer except to say that I am attached and obliged to her, to which it might be objected that other people also feel attached to their mothers; but if I hold that my mother *qua* an elderly sick person should remain on board, then my verdict is based on relevant good reasons. The fact that a sick elderly human being is more exposed to affliction than a young healthy person does not depend on a particular culture. Our human natures have sufficient trans-cultural similarities to enable us to extend this kind of judgment to other cultures.

MacIntyre, as a second criticism, might also object to my vulnerability approach along the lines of his criticism of Kant's deontology; that is to say, in the absence of the notion of the ultimate good our moral theory turns into a rule-based moral absolutism that cannot accommodate exceptions to these rules which might be required in particular situations.

In chapter 2 on MacIntyre's virtue-ethics, I explained his argument that moral rules cannot provide us with the full knowledge that we need in order to act morally in all situations. In this account, the application of moral rules itself is not rule-governed; for instance, the moral rule of truth-telling, which MacIntyre takes to be an absolute rule for Kant, does not tell us which truth is to be told to whom, when to be silent or even when to tell a lie for the sake of a higher good. We need, in MacIntyre's view, to have the virtues, particularly the virtue of practical rationality or *phronesis*, and a hierarchy of goods in order to be able to apply moral rules aright in practical situations (1988a, p.117).

MacIntyre (2006m, p.130) disagrees with the prudential interpretation of Kant regarding the moral permissibility of occasional white lies, which comes to the fore in Kant's distinction between untruth and lies (Kant

[1750s-1790s] 1997, (27:448) p.203)[48]. Kant there draws a line regarding truth-telling between the cases in which truth-telling will be manipulated by bad intentions, and cases in which there is not wickedness at stake, and allows lying in the former cases.

MacIntyre argues that this prudential view is not sustained in Kant's later and more developed works, for instance in Kant's account in *The Metaphysics of Morals* in which he leaves no room for the moral permissibility of lying. In MacIntyre's view (2006m, p.128), Kant upholds the unqualified necessity of truth-telling for individuals as rational agents, and cannot accommodate occasional exceptions to this necessary moral rule. Veracity for Kant, in Macintyre's view, is what we owe to humanity, and by lying we wrong humanity in general, and by so doing the liar wrongs himself. Kant's moral system, MacIntyre (2006m, p.132) maintains, lacks the scale for weighing the good of refraining from lying against, for instance, the good of saving an innocent child which might require lying, and so any choice between them would be arbitrary. MacIntyre's alternative is that we should have a single moral practice that prohibits lying and, at the same time, requires it on necessary occasions (2006m, p.134); in other words, there should be a single logic behind the both kinds of moral affirmatives. For this to work, MacIntyre (2006m, p. 135) holds, we should start with our social relations in practices which have their own internal goods, rather than with our individual selves in order to derive our moral obligations. Instead of asking what I as a rational individual am bound to, we should ask what "we" as potentially or actually rational persons are bound to in our relationships.

MacIntyre, thus, is giving a social aspect to individual autonomy by holding that we achieve autonomy through our relationships in which we

---

[48] Kant's text is as follows. "But if, in all cases, we were to remain faithful to every detail of the truth, we might often expose ourselves to the wickedness of others, who wanted to abuse our truthfulness. If everyone were well disposed, it would not only be a duty not to lie, but nobody would need to do it, since he would have nothing to worry about. Now, however, since men are malicious, it is true that we often court danger by punctilious observance of the truth, and hence has arisen the concept of the necessary lie, which is a very critical point for the moral philosopher" (Kant [1750s-1790s] 1997, (27:448) p.203).

depend on each other and acknowledge our mutual dependence (1999a, p.xi). Of course, in his view, we can and should hold these relationships open to evaluation; but this very ability to criticize is attained in our relationships. This kind of autonomy, which may be called social autonomy, does not consist "in total independence from and of the sentiments, judgments, and actions of others"; rather, it requires the distinction between when we should be independent and when to be dependent on others (2006m, p.136).

Based on this account, for instance, a child is dependent on his mother, and the mother owes him an obligation to protect him against unjustified aggression, if necessary, by telling a lie or even by killing the aggressor. Without the permissibility of lying in this context, the good of the practice of motherhood is not achieved. Accordingly, the internal good of this practice is the single basis of moral evaluations in this context in both cases, that is, when it is necessary to be truthful and to tell lies (2006m, p.138). While truthfulness is crucial for every practice with internal goods in order for participants to learn what they need from each other and to have trust in each other, it is also the responsibility of those who are bound to each other to protect their relationships against the destructive effects of moral evils, for instance, by telling a lie, in a way that it produces the least possible harm to the aggressor (2006m, pp.136-139).

MacIntyre (2006m, p.139) holds that in his moral theory permissible lying is not introduced as a qualification to truthfulness; rather, both sides of the rule "serve one and the same purpose and are justified in one and the same way as that part of the rule that enjoins truthfulness in relationships." Accordingly, MacIntyre's main point here is that we should appeal to the notion of internal goods in practices in order to have a measure for trade-offs between different goods, without which we do not know when to abide by and when to break moral rules; and this is what Kant's moral theory lacks, as it is understood by MacIntyre.

I think MacIntyre's interpretation of Kant as morally absolutist is not an adequate interpretation. I cannot here, for reasons of space, discuss the

282

pros and cons of this interpretation in any detail; but it is worth noting that a number of Kant specialists, such as O. O'Neill (1983), R. B. Louden (1986), and A. W. Wood (2008), among others, have emphasized an interpretation of Kant that allows for contextual moral judgments, which is different from MacIntyre's absolutist interpretation. For instance, Wood (2008, p.61) holds that for Kant, as well as for J. S. Mill, moral rules cannot be directly deduced from fundamental principles, and the relation between the two is "looser and more hermeneutical in character", and involves a set of intermediate rules developed in light of empirical facts. As Wood (2008, p.62) explains, for Kant the dignity of rational nature as an end in itself as the first principle provides some guidance for moral judgment, but it cannot specify precisely what the moral rules should be and how they should change in view of new circumstances or our improved knowledge of a situation. Wood (2008, p.62) appeals to J. Mill's metaphor that there is no scientific calculus for determining when an existing road which is now properly working would become ineffective as a result of new conditions, and so when it would be necessary to construct new roads. The same is true for moral judgments which require sensitivity to the requirements of each practical situation, as is clear from Kant's distinction between untruth and lies.

In response to MacIntyre, I would thus say in order to have an adaptable moral theory which serves the good and the best in particular situations we do not need to have a hierarchy of goods that terminates at the ultimate good. In other words, the point that we should have recourse to the internal goods of practices in order to produce a context-sensitive moral theory does not suggest that we need a shared account of the good or the final *telos*. The two conditions of meeting human basic needs and being based on shareable good reasons can fulfill this function. That saving an innocent life reasonably outweighs telling a single lie does not depend on a particular ethical point of view which is associated with an account of the good. Admitting that survival is a basic human good which can form the basis of good reasoning would suffice for this purpose. When there is a clash between goods, we can appeal to common sense and experience to see

283

which one is a more basic good the criterion for which is the extent it contributes to a human being's normal and desirable functioning. This account is different from Aristotle's and MacIntyre's insight that membership in a community that enjoys a shared account of the human good is a precondition of practical rationality:

> Aristotle gave us excellent reasons for believing that both rational enquiry in politics and ethics and rationality in action require membership in a community which shares allegiance to some tolerably specific overall conception of the ultimate human good (1991c, p.99).

We need some virtues to commit ourselves to a process of practical reasoning which is subject to the two conditions of satisfying human animal and intellectual needs; in particular, we need to subordinate our personal feelings to good justifiable grounds. The virtues that we need for the morality of our actions do not need to be directed toward the good; we only need some features to commit us to a fair process of reasoning, that is, practical reasoning that is not based on arbitrary and unjustifiable grounds, and this would be enough for entering into collective practical reasoning.

A third criticism that could be offered by MacIntyre of my vulnerability approach consists in his disapproval of utilitarianism. The first part of his objection, as was explained in chapter 5, is based on the incommensurability of the goods that should be ordered; MacIntyre ([1977] 1992b, pp.182-183) captures the point as follows:

> It is clear that the pleasure of climbing a mountain, the pleasure of listening to Bartok and the pleasure of drinking Guinness stout are three very disputable things. There is not some one state to the production of which the climbing, the listening and the drinking are merely alternative means. Nor is there any scale on which they can be weighed against each other. But if this is true of pleasures, how much more complex must matters become when we seek to weigh against each other such goods as those of restoring health to the sick, of scientific enquiry or of friendship[?]

The second and related part of his criticism is that there are different methods for rank ordering, so that the ranking of goods depends on the

284

method chosen, the person who is rank ordering and the preferences that have been assigned more weight ([1977] 1992b, p.183).

To explain further MacIntyre's point, I have so far insisted that moral reasons should be good shareable reasons by which I mean reasons that can be justified objectively without relying on subjective reasons that do not transcend the individual. MacIntyre might object and ask good reasons for whom? Good reasons for a person whose preferences are mainly for climbing might be different from those of a person who has stronger preferences for drinking or for music; nevertheless, in my view, it is possible for these different persons to appeal to good reasons in their interactions with each other. By good reasons in the latter case, I mean good reasons at a meta-level, that is to say, not good reasons from the perspective of any of these agents who have different incommensurable preferences; rather, good reasons from a higher perspective that regulates their relationships on the basis of fair terms, that is, relevant non-arbitrary reasons that are justifiable to any reasonable observer. Each of them can pursue his own preferences provided that he does not interfere with others' preferences and with the public order. The distribution of public goods should be based on relevant measures and not on individual preferences of the agents; for instance, access to elementary education should be on the basis of the equal need of individuals, irrespective of their personal achievements and preferences; while the relevant measure for access to higher education is individuals' competitive abilities. The reason for this is that elementary education addresses the basic needs of individuals, which should be met regardless of their particular situations and achievements. Accordingly, morality requires managing the relationships between individuals on the basis of reasons that can be inter-subjectively justified; that is to say, based on reasons which are non-arbitrary and relevant to particular contexts.[49]

---

[49] This position is very similar to Michael Walzer's view in *Spheres of Justice: a Defense of Plurality and Equality* (1983) in which he favors justice as complex equality by which he criticizes the domination of some goods like education by some other goods like wealth. In

I am defending here a rationalistic approach according to which individuals are able to adopt a higher perspective to reflect on their existing set of desires to check their rationality and reasonableness. Furthermore, this reflection can be motivational for them; that is to say, reason is not the slave of the passions, as assumed by Hume, and can convince the reasonable individual to modify his own desires in order to be a moral agent. In other words, the agent is not captured by his account of the good and his attachments, and can live on fair terms with other agents who have different accounts of the good. This is not to say that using this approach will resolve all moral tensions and dilemmas; the point, rather, is that moral conflicts can be handled in a reasonable way even if they resist solution. At least, it might be possible to show that the persistence of a moral dispute is not due to personal whims, but due to different underlying premises that are all based on good reasons from different perspectives.

I might use again Aquinas' account of the intellect to support this rationalistic view, as this account is adopted by MacIntyre. As explained in chapter 3, the intellect for Aquinas has an abstract character by which he means the intellect only formally, and not materially, becomes identical with the object of knowledge, and this means the distinction between the two and the ability of the agent to reflect on his current positions persist. Accordingly, in MacIntyre's example above, the agent with strong preferences for drinking has the capacity to imagine himself in the position of other agents with different desires in order to regulate their relationships fairly.

Observing this fair process of practical reasoning requires intellectual and moral virtues for agents to know the relevant measures in any particular situation and to commit themselves to its consequences; however, we do not necessarily need to become educated according to an Aristotelian or Thomistic account of virtue-ethics which is ordered toward the good. We need to foster moral virtues in order to infuse in ourselves, in R. Rorty's

---

my account, what justifies the domination of some goods in the process of distribution of other goods is that it can be reasonably justified with reference to human vulnerability.

terms, a sense of solidarity with our fellow-human beings. As Rorty (1989, p.190) puts it, "we have a moral obligation to feel a sense of solidarity with all other human beings"; and this sense can be cultivated through our moral upbringing. This requires some virtues on the part of moral agents to curb their own egoistic preferences and to see other human beings, in Rorty's terms, as "fellow sufferers" (1989, p.xvi).

MacIntyre might argue that Aristotelianism and Thomism can foster the virtues that are necessary for addressing others' vulnerability better than can a liberal account. The reason for this claim is that according to MacIntyre, these two traditions define individual goods in light of the common good, and by this they can break the dichotomy between self-regarding and other-regarding morality. If the individual defines his own good by reference to the common good the clashes between his goods and others' goods disappear, such that he will regard the vulnerability of others as his own; as MacIntyre (1999a, p.109) writes, "The individual in order not just to pursue, but even to define her or his good in concrete terms has first to recognize the goods of the community as goods that she or he must make her own."

The view that the individual should first acknowledge the goods of the community in order to define his own goods is very idealistic. It is difficult to deny that the individual initially starts with what pleases and belongs to him, and then tries to harmonize the satisfaction of his own preferences with the satisfaction of those of others. There are both self- and other-regarding elements in human beings, and no moral tradition can abolish either of them; as MacIntyre (1959b, p.106) himself attested a long time ago, "They [human beings] are an intricate mixture of altruism and selfishness and the one is not reducible to a form of the other". However, a morality might provide justification for subordinating individual preferences to the common good.

MacIntyre (1999a, p.131) holds that the modern state does not serve the common good, because the weight it gives to different preferences reflects the parties' bargaining power, which is related to money. The way

the modern state distributes goods "does not reflect a common mind arrived at through widespread shared deliberation by norms of rational enquiry. Indeed the size of modern states would itself preclude this" (1999a, p.131).

I have two points in response to MacIntyre. The first is that although there might not be an Aristotelian-cum-Thomistic notion of the common good in modern times, which is directed toward the notion of the good, we can have and form a notion of the common good based on the inherent dignity of human beings irrespective of their notions of the good, which then leads us to a fair and reasonable process of practical reasoning. The second point is that although the big size of the modern state makes deliberative decision-making difficult, we can use modern technologies like online-surveys to garner feedback about different policies. The return to small local communities does not necessarily facilitate deliberative democracy and respect for the common good, as all feudalistic communities were local. What is of significance here is to grant human beings dignity independently of their accounts of the good, which prepares the ground for addressing their basic, including their intellectual, needs.

A fourth criticism by MacIntyre of my vulnerability approach would be along the lines of his criticism of the notion of the neutrality of the modern state. To put this briefly, MacIntyre's point is that the modern liberal state claims to be neutral between different notions of the good through providing a framework that can accommodate different accounts of the good in so far as they are pursued within that framework (1988a, p.345). MacIntyre (1988a, p.345) argues that there is no neutral position, and that "The starting points of liberal theorizing are never neutral as between conceptions of the human good; they are always liberal starting points." In line with this, MacIntyre (1972, p.333) also criticizes Rawls' view regarding the priority of the notion of justice over other goods:

> The agents in the initial situation are made by Rawls to accept the fact that they are to agree in their conception of justice, but to disagree in their conceptions of other goods. Certain parts of morals and politics are to be treated as essentially areas of human agreement, others as essentially areas of human disagreement. But why should we accept

this? Might we not rather ask first, "What is the good for man?" and only then decide what justice would be in a society where men might realise that good? Rawls simply lays it down that justice has a certain primacy.

This criticism is also reflected in MacIntyre's desert-based account of justice, which holds justice should be judged according to the contribution of the people to the common good in a community (1981, pp.250-251). In MacIntyre's view, neither Rawls nor Nozick can appeal to the notion of desert due to the lack of agreement on the notion of the common good in the society for which they are theorizing (1981, p.249).

I think MacIntyre's point that there is no agreement on the notion of the common good in modern life is not correct. We all agree that the reduction of poverty, social inequality, violence, and the like is a part of the common good, and that the state should not be neutral about them. We have a great deal of agreement on the notion of the common good, provided that we restrict this notion to human beings' basic needs and goods. Disputes over this notion can be expected to be resolved to a significant degree in a process of fair practical reasoning.

MacIntyre, in fact, in his book *Dependent Rational Animals* has given a central place to the issue of human vulnerability, as was pointed to in the first chapter, which shows he is in some agreement with me on this issue. He criticizes Western philosophy for its inadequate attention to human vulnerability and affliction:

> From Plato to Moore and since there are usually, with some rare exceptions, only passing references to human vulnerability and affliction and to the connections between them and our dependence on others. Some of the facts of human limitation and of our consequent need of cooperation with others are more generally acknowledged, but for the most part only then to be put on one side (1999a, p.1).

MacIntyre holds that human vulnerability and our necessary dependence on others should be acknowledged if the individual seeks to attain the kind of autonomy that is highly emphasized in modern moral

289

philosophy (1999a, p.8). We need the virtues in order to start depending on others, including parents and masters, in our progress toward becoming independent practical reasoners. MacIntyre believes Aquinas' interpretation of Aristotle's thought accommodates the virtues of acknowledged dependence better than does Aristotle himself, as Aquinas does not share some aspects of Aristotle's view of the nobleman. Aquinas "asks God to grant that he may happily share with those in need what he has, while humbly asking for what he needs from those who have" (1999a, p.xi).

If MacIntyre (1999a, p.xi) thinks Aquinas' interpretation of Aristotle can account for "the virtues that reckoned not only with our animal condition, but also with the need to acknowledge our consequent vulnerability and dependence", then we can expect him to accept the possibility of a shared account of morality for human beings, who actually or potentially are open to the different degrees and kinds of vulnerability. On such a basis, we have to qualify MacIntyre's claim that "Indeed, a morality has no existence except in its actual and possible social embodiments, and what it amounts to is what it does or can amount to in its socially embodied forms" (1994c, p.143); or his claim that "Moral philosophies, however they may aspire to achieve more than this, always do articulate the morality of some particular social and cultural standpoint" (1981, p.268). This view of morality implies the lack of any measures independent of particular social contexts for morality.

The fact that a morality has its roots in a given social context does not mean that its validity is limited to that context, or that there are no context-transcending grounds for its evaluation. If that morality can be sustained on the basis of good shareable reasons which are relevant non-arbitrary reasons this shows its validity is not limited to that context.

Despite MacIntyre's particular attention to the issue of human vulnerability, as K. Shrader-Frechette (2002, p.100) notes, his argument against the validity of the idea of natural rights does not cohere with this attitude. MacIntyre ([1978] 1985, pp.129-130) holds that there are no valid claims to the kind of rights that belong to human beings as such

independently of their social roles in practices; "such rights are at one with unicorns, witches and Meinong's glass mountain."[50] In his view, the possession of rights is only intelligible within the contexts of practices that set some regulations for the achievement of their internal goods; for instance, "In the game of chess each player has a right to move in turn, the player who is White having the right to move first" ([1978] 1985, p.130); as he puts it:

> The possession of the right is only intelligible in the context of a developed and complex form of human practice. The exercise of such rights is a necessary part of such practices and their violation is to varying degrees destructive of such practice. The justification of the claim to possess such a right must initially refer us to the rules of the practice and thereafter to the possible justifications of the practice ([1978] 1985, p.130).

In line with my argument in the first part of this chapter, where I held that MacIntyre in his narrative account of intelligibility dissolves the individual into the social, I reply to him here that the requirements of our animality and intellectuality, that is, our basic needs and our right to justification, which belong to human beings irrespective of their social roles, can justify the necessity of such natural rights.

MacIntyre likens, and then dismisses, the existence of natural rights to the existence of unicorns and witches, but I think this is a mistake. When we say that there are natural rights, this is not to say that the rights exist out there like unicorns and witches to be rejected by physics and commonsensical observation. The validity of rights is a matter of normative necessity in the sense that we need these norms in order to protect human beings against vulnerability; as A. Gutmann (1985, p.315) puts the point:

---

[50] See also MacIntyre (1981, p.69) where he argues that "we do not need to be distracted into answering them [arguments about the existence of natural rights], for the truth is plain: there are no such rights, and belief in them is one with belief in witches and in unicorns." Also, he holds "The dominant contemporary idiom and rhetoric of rights cannot serve genuinely rational purposes, and we ought not to conduct our moral and political arguments in terms derived from that idiom and rhetoric" (1991c, p.96).

> ...believing in rights is one way of regulating and constraining our behavior toward one another in a desirable manner. This reason does not compete with physics; it does not require us to believe that rights "exist" in any sense that is incompatible with the "laws of nature" as established by modern science.

MacIntyre's objection to the idea of natural rights seems to have been directed at the way of justifying these rights as free-standing and self-evident truths, and not at the content of these rights; as he puts it, "In the eighteenth century the existence of such natural rights was defended on the grounds that the statements asserting them were self-evident truths; but the required concept of self-evidence could not be sustained" ([1978] 1985, p.130).This is clear in what MacIntyre says in his personal communication to K. Shrader-Frechette (2001), "I am in agreement with many of the substantive moral claims by natural rights theorists, but in disagreement with their way of defending these claims. No one ought to be treated in a way that is inconsistent with the precepts of the natural law ... [but] I do not think that ... 'a right' adds anything to what is being claimed (cited in K. Shrader-Frechette (2002, p.115))."

I agree with MacIntyre that these rights are not self-evident truths; however, they can be justified as the requirements of human beings' normal and desirable functioning. The fact that human beings have capacities and entitlements to basic goods and to a fair process of practical reasoning does not depend on having a social role or a place in some practice, as these features apply to human beings *qua* human beings. Of course, social roles create a set of rights and obligations, but there are also rights of individuals *qua* individuals as human beings.

If MacIntyre agrees with the content of natural rights, which indeed is required by his espousal of the natural law tradition, and disagrees only with the way these rights are justified, he should make this position clear, and revise his rhetoric against the idea of natural or human rights. This would make his attitude toward human vulnerability more consistent than it is now. Attention to these two aspects of human beings, animal and intellectual

aspects, which are necessary for their normal functioning, is required by MacIntyre's espousal of the natural law tradition; as he puts it, "the precepts of the natural law are those rules of reason which a human being obeys, characteristically without explicitly formulating them, when that human being is functioning normally" (2000, p.108).

Moral disagreements in so far as they are beyond the threshold of morality, and are conducted in a framework which respects human beings' basic goods, should not count as a catastrophic situation. The main point of my discussion in this section is that if modern morality can be restored in order to protect its subjects' basic goods including their right to justification and to fair reasoning, then we can dismiss MacIntyre's claim that modern morality is the fragmentary remains of the classical moral scheme, and so lacks rational justification and intelligibility. For instance, in order to respect the priority right of pedestrians to cross a street I, as a driver, do not need to know what sort of persons they are, or where their destinations are; it should suffice for me to know that wherever they want to go it is good for them and for me to cross the street safely.

In this chapter, in fact, I tried to offer a bottom-up picture of morality as an alternative to MacIntyre's top-down account. Instead of holding that we need an agreement on the notion of the good in order to justify morality, I insisted that we can begin with the basic features of human beings, which address their animal and intellectual aspects, that remain valid for different accounts of the good. Though I agree with the kind of criticism of modernity offered by MacIntyre and C. Taylor (1991, p.4) that there is nothing in modern times to confer meaning on human life, and that there is nothing worth dying for in modern times, I do not think this lack of sense for the entire human life would put morality into a justificatory crisis. In other words, though the modern individual might experience problems in having a meaningful and teleological life due to not having a final aim to strive for, he can intelligibly justify his account of morality based on the notion of inherent human dignity which represents itself in fulfilling human beings' basic animal and intellectual needs. The unintelligibility of our

entire lives does not render all segments of our lives meaningless; to think otherwise would be a matter of the fallacy of division by ascribing the properties of a whole to its constituents. That the entire human life might be pointless does not necessarily mean all parts of this life have the same feature.

VI.4 Conclusion

In chapter 5, I showed that the rational superiority of Aristotelianism and Thomism, as opposed to what MacIntyre maintains, is not a conclusion that rival traditions are rationally required to acknowledge based on their own measures. MacIntyre has some meta-ethical positions which inform his idea regarding the superiority of these two traditions. These two meta-ethical positions are the narrative unity of intelligibility and an objective account of the good. I argued that the intelligibility of actions does not depend on history and story-telling, and that MacIntyre is dissolving the individual into the social and the historical. MacIntyre, in other words, has undervalued the capacity of the individual to discard his past narratives and to have his own account of intelligibility based on reasons that are in principle shareable, to which others might not have access at the moment. If this is correct, then the inability to form narrative unities about our lives as a result of not having an objective notion of the good does not threaten the intelligibility of our actions.

With regard to the objectivity of the good, I held that we can justify morality on the basis of some goods that do not have the finality of the good which is the subject of ethics. I contrasted morality with ethics, as the latter is informed by an account of the good life; while the former points to conditions that respect human beings as rational beings who have basic needs and a right to justification. The test for basic needs is that the failure to satisfy them would damage human beings' normal and desirable functioning, and this demarcation criterion lets us have a shared zone between cultures despite the fact that there are some other needs, desires and expectations that vary between them. Morality, so understood, sets some limits for the reasonableness of ethics, and thus restricts perspectivism and

relativism. A limited consensus on the notion of the common good can sustain morality, without the need for an agreement on the good.

If my argument is sound, then we can consider modern morality not as unintelligible fragmentary survivals of the classical morality, as its "oughts" can be meaningful in light of their part in securing basic human goods. These oughts do not need to refer to the good in order to be intelligible.

What I conclude from this chapter is that, as opposed to MacIntyre's view, the moral crisis in the modern world does not need the Aristotelian and Thomistic moral approaches which invoke a notion of the final human good. It would suffice for us to check if the grounds of our reasoning derive from selfish motives, or from motives that track goods and, thus, are reciprocally and generally justifiable. Moral reasons in order to be reciprocally justifiable need to consider human beings as possessing inherent dignity independently of their other features, addressing human beings' needs in proportion to their vulnerability.

VII- Final Conclusion

This thesis was a study on the notion of practical rationality. Its main objective was to explore whether there is a shared way of reasoning in practical and moral issues between different cultures and traditions. For this purpose, I chose MacIntyre's notion of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rationality and justice as the key topic of the thesis, which holds there is no rationality and justice independent of a tradition. Rationality here is mainly practical rationality a most important outcome of which is the idea of justice.

The thesis comprised six chapters. In the first chapter, I discussed the role of traditions from MacIntyre's perspective. To this end, I divided the term tradition into the two notions of traditions in a general and in an ideal sense. The ideal sense of tradition reflects MacIntyre's normative attitude toward the classical, Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions in which, MacIntyre holds, we can find a remedy for the malaises of modern Liberalism. I referred to the features of tradition in the ideal sense as follows. 1-Being progressive and cumulative over time, and thus moving to more adequate accounts of its objects than either its own accounts in its earlier stages or its rivals' accounts; 2-consisting of arguments about the virtues and the good of its members, and enjoying a widespread agreement on these notions (mostly applicable to moral traditions than to intellectual ones). I then explained the different functions of traditions and the constitution thesis in MacIntyre's view as follows.

1-Traditions as conceptual schemes or paradigms, in the sense that traditions provide different understandings of the natural and the social world. I argued that this function sometimes assumes an ontological meaning which points to the formation of the identities of individuals in traditions. I argued that this function particularly in its ontological sense might cause a misunderstanding of MacIntyre's thought by suggesting the idea that individuals are cognitively limited to their own traditions.

2-Traditions as serving a methodological function, by which I meant the special procedures that direct a research enquiry in a particular tradition.

296

Traditions provide contingent starting-points for enquiries, without which the search for the good and the universal cannot commence. To rationally appraise some claim, we have to narrate how the argument in a particular tradition has progressed. Rationality is judged on the basis of the best existing standards in a particular context. The CT in this sense is related to fallible reasoning which was discussed in chapters 3 and 4.

3-Tradition as a context for defining and exercising the virtues, which in MacIntyre's account is a feature of a well-ordered moral tradition. The main feature of ideal traditions, which makes them capable of fulfilling this function, is their recourse to the notion of the common good which serves as an objective and shared criterion for morality. The concept of virtue finds its application through some antecedent accounts of moral or social life, which are provided in traditions. Morality in a good community is what people positively observe to approach their good, and not as only negative rules to regulate their relationships. The lack of an adequate knowledge of the human good comes with an inadequate knowledge of right rules for action in particular situations. I then explained that MacIntyre's appraisal of the classical and, in particular, the Aristotelian tradition, in part, stems tacitly from his account of practical rationality as an objectivity that, in his view, can be provided best in the classical tradition. In the classical tradition, internal goods of practices, narratives of human life and traditions can serve as objective measures independently of personal preferences to justify moral statements. The virtues serve as objective criteria to subordinate individual desires, and to direct them toward the good of practices. I argued that MacIntyre's earlier social theory without metaphysical foundations lacks sufficient content and founders upon the charge of formalism. I pointed to the two ways in which MacIntyre has subsequently turned to metaphysics, that is, his metaphysical view of the natural law tradition, and his view of human essential vulnerability which requires the virtues of acknowledged dependence for individuals to become independent practical reasoners; a state in which agents move from merely having reasons for actions to having the ability to evaluate those reasons.

297

In the second chapter, I explained the constitution thesis on the basis of each function as outlined above. MacIntyre criticizes the Enlightenment account of rationality on the grounds that there are no substantive principles of rationality that stand independent of particular traditions. While the enlightenment project, as depicted by MacIntyre, sought to discover the universal norms and rules of rationality, in MacIntyre's view there are no universal measures of rationality, as it is only formal norms such as the law of non-contradiction that apply universally.

I argued that the term "constituted" used by MacIntyre in his constitution thesis fits better the function of traditions as conceptual schemes and the ontological function than the two others, which are the methodological and the contextual functions. This might lead to a misunderstanding of MacIntyre's point by offering a conservative account of him.

Regarding the CT based on the role of traditions as conceptual schemes, I held that the difference in the role played by desires between the goods of excellence and the goods of effectiveness results in different structures of practical rationality. In practical rationality based on the goods of effectiveness, as in Humean practical rationality, there is no vantage point for desires to comply with, and there would be no necessary or causal relation between the outcome of a practical syllogism and an action; whereas the practical reasoning based on the goods of excellence employs a unified picture of an agent's desires. In this view, what pleases the agent will not *per se* be a good reason for acts; rather, what is conducive to his good would be a good reason for him to act upon. Distinct types of practical rationality have been constituted differently in different traditions based on their different notions of human nature and the good, which in turn result in different accounts of the virtues. An Aristotelian view of human nature results in an approach to practical reasoning based on the education of desires which terminates in an action, unlike an emotivistic view of human nature and its good. This difference reflects itself in the meanings of different virtues built upon different practical rationalities. This account of

298

the constitution thesis, however, runs the risk of offering a conservative communitarian picture of MacIntyre, who sees no prospect of transcending the horizon of a given community; a view which MacIntyre himself is at pains to reject.

Regarding the CT based on the role of traditions as a context for defining and cultivating the virtues, I held that practical habituation in the exercise of the virtues has to precede education in moral theory. Only those who have acquired good habits are able to theorize well about moral issues. Only the practically intelligent human being, in this Aristotelian view, can judge the mean and the right in practical situations.

Regarding the CT based on the methodological function of traditions, I explained MacIntyre's view that the rationality of tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry is a matter of progress that is occurring in a tradition; a tradition whose life and enquiries begin from "some pure historical contingency, from the beliefs, institutions, and practices of some particular community which constitute a given" (1988a, p.354).Based on this, MacIntyre, contrary to the Enlightenment view, emphasizes the relevance of first principles to the conceptual schemes in which these first principles are working, and denies that there are first principles whose evidence can be known by all rational human beings irrespective of the traditions in which the theories are formed. I also argued that MacIntyre's criticism of the liberal ideal of neutrality in line with his CT is mistaken, as it does not consider the possibility of distinction between ontological and normative detachment. The individual's normative capacity for understanding other notions of the good is compatible with him inevitably having a position in a given tradition. I also held that the wording of the CT, particularly the term constitution, does not fit this methodological sense, as explained above. I proposed the use of expressions such as "tradition-guided rationality", "tradition-directed rationality" or "tradition-related rationality" in place of tradition-constituted rationality.

In the third chapter, the discussion shifted from the issue of rationality to that of truth. This was necessary in order to explain how different

299

traditions interact with each other on the basis of their internal measures of rationality in order to discover what truth is, which lies in correspondence with reality that is independent of different perspectives. In this chapter, I explained some Thomistic elements of MacIntyre's theory of truth. MacIntyre's theory of truth like Aristotle's and Aquinas' theory is a realist and correspondence one, in the sense that there is an independent reality which serves as the measure of truth. This correspondence relation is different from the modern version in that in the former the relation holds primarily between the intellect and the object, and not between propositions and facts. The intellect, which of course later forms concepts and propositions, should become adequate to and formally identical with the object in order to grasp the truth. This gives a metaphysical sense to Aquinas's theory of truth, because the intellect's capacity for knowing and the object's capacity for being known become actualized in the knowledge-process. This metaphysical explanation, unlike epistemological interpretations of Aquinas' theory of truth, has particularistic aspects that suit MacIntyre's CT. The intellect as an embodied entity cannot leave aside all its particularities in order to formulate universal and convincing-for-all principles. It should begin with its currently held positions, and by a process of revision and refutation it arrives at more compelling and more adequate beliefs. This is also related to a metaphysical interpretation of first principles according to which substantial first principles are not free-standing self-evident principles; rather, their evidence is known for a mind that is informed by the tradition within which they are formulated, or for a mind that has theoretical grasp of the issue in a tradition.

I also explained MacIntyre's fallibilism, which is related to the CT in its methodological sense, based on some features of Aquinas' theory of knowledge, namely, 1) Aquinas' argumentative methodology, 2) the moral aspect of his theory of truth, which entails openness to all criticisms, 3) the notion of the intellect's adequacy and activity, which emphasizes a gradualist progress toward truth, 4) MacIntyre's weak interpretation of Aquinas' notion of the intellect's veracity, which leaves room for fallible reasoning and 5) MacIntyre's anti-epistemological interpretation of

Aquinas, which denies a Cartesian certitude to be acquired at the beginning of our enquiries. However, this metaphysical interpretation might run against the discursive reasoning that MacIntyre endorses, or put it off to later epistemological phases of the knowledge-process. The reason is that in so far as we lack knowledge of first principles that are in fact employed in our reasoning we cannot participate in a productive dialogue with our opponents over them. Also, it is not clear how it is possible to evaluate the contingent starting-points of traditions, when the discussion reaches this stage. I suggested that there should be some substantive measures of rationality in light of which to minimally assess different traditions and their first principles against each other.

Based on MacIntyre's presentation of Aquinas' account of knowledge, we can infer that his CT points to a gradualist and contextual account of knowledge, and that it does not have relativistic and perspectivistic connotations. In the fourth chapter, I attended more fully to MacIntyre's theory of truth. I compared MacIntyre's theory of truth and his CT with relativism and perspectivism as follows.

With regard to moral relativism, I argued that MacIntyre can avoid this charge, because both his earlier social and his later metaphysical approaches are oriented toward Aristotelianism and Thomism. The notion of *telos* employed in these two traditions is wider than the notion of function which is defined in social contexts. If there is a context-transcending notion of *telos* and the good for human beings *qua* human beings, it will provide some independent measures for dismissing the charge of moral relativism.

With regard to cognitive relativism, I argued that while MacIntyre's intention and his tenor of thought are anti-relativistic, his method based on the notion of epistemological crises cannot adequately justify his position against relativism, due to its internalism. To revise this method, I argued we need to hold that there are some universal measures that are valid across traditions, and can be used to evaluate these traditions. I also held that MacIntyre should clarify if he by his constitution thesis means a rule-based particularism—that is a particularism that follows a logic, and whether this

logic may be shared between traditions, at least when basic human goods are at stake.

With regard to perspectivism, I argued that MacIntyre thinks it possible to understand other ideas from other perspectives, much as they are comprehended by those within the tradition in question. Individuals are not captured by their own tradition to the extent that they are not able to understand reality independently of their own perspective. I also appealed to the immateriality of the intellect to justify its transcending capacity, and to the non-nominalism of Aquinas and MacIntyre, which holds the order of the world is independent of our minds, and that it is apt to disclose itself independently of our mental categories, and reveal their inadequacies. This differentiates MacIntyre's CT from philosophy after the linguistic turn. In addition to this metaphysical and ontological aspect, MacIntyre's insistence on dialogue with others, and distinguishing between thinking for oneself and thinking by oneself highlights the necessity of overcoming perspectivism.

In chapter 5, I tried to investigate how MacIntyre thinks Thomism is rationally superior to its rivals, and so can claim truth based on the notion of the adequacy of the intellect or a theory against its challengers. I explained that MacIntyre's claim consists of two strands. The first part concerned the rational superiority of Thomism over Aristotelianism and Augustinianism, which involved showing that Thomism has been able to make a consistent amalgam of these two traditions, and overcome their inadequacies. The second part addressed the superiority of Thomism over its radical rivals by showing that these rivals are in a state of disarray, and the former is able to explain and remedy their incapacity to provide a rational justification for morality. I then discussed that, despite MacIntyre's claim, the superiority of Thomism over other traditions is not identifiable from within these traditions, and that his view in this regard is based on his own meta-ethical convictions, that is, a narrative account of the intelligibility of actions, and an objective justification based on the notion of the good.

In the sixth chapter, I argued that firstly the intelligibility of actions as segments of our lives does not require a narrative account of the whole of human life, secondly we can have an account of morality that does not depend on the notion of the final good; rather, it assumes basic facts about human beings, which include their basic and intellectual needs the failure to satisfy which damages their normal and desirable functioning. The mark of real needs is that their satisfaction sustains and improves our normal and desirable functioning, and this point lets us distinguish real needs from our acquired desires and expectations. One might undertake a practical study to see if the lack of some goods affects our normal and desirable performance, and in this respect we might need other peoples' judgments.

I contrasted this account of morality with ethics, where the latter is informed by an account of the good life, and the former points to conditions that respect human beings as beings who have basic needs and a right to justification required by their intellectual aspect. This account of morality works well in conditions in which people lack an agreement on the notion of the good. If we can provide a justification for morality independent of the notions of the good, then MacIntyre's view that modern liberal morality lacks resources for its justification unless it adopts the Aristotelian and Thomistic notions of the common good and the good for each person is flawed; for we can justify morality in terms of what is contributing to human beings' normal and desirable functioning, and not necessarily to human flourishing. Most moral norms that are honoured in a religious community based on a notion of the human good and flourishing, such as the badness of lying, backbiting, stealing, torturing, murdering, raping, etc., can also be justified in terms of human beings' normal and desirable functioning in secular terms. A religious justification might possess a stronger enforcement mechanism than does a secular justification, but their lists of virtues and vices significantly overlaps.

Let us now, after this summary, return to the main issue of the thesis, that is, MacIntyre's idea of tradition-constituted rationality. What, finally, does MacIntyre seek to convey by this account of rationality? In the light of

303

the discussions in the preceding chapters, I shall recall what this account of rationality is and what it is not.

I think we can understand MacIntyre's constitution thesis in contrast to Cartesian epistemology and Kant's moral philosophy as they are understood by him. The constitution thesis runs counter to Cartesian epistemology by its anti-epistemological tendencies; that is to say, we do not and cannot start our substantial intellectual enquiries based on some indubitable ideas whose evidence can be shown to any rational human being; rather, we start from our contingent beliefs and move gradually toward their underlying principles whose evidence is clear to minds that have been formed in that tradition or have had the intellectual achievement of grasping the ideas in that tradition. The adequacy of these principles lies in the superiority of the whole system in which they are operating over other systems. Based on this view, we cannot mathematically prove our beliefs against others by abstracting some principles from a whole system; rather, we should note the role these principles and beliefs play in the history of a tradition and the improvement that they make upon the tradition's previous stages.

The constitution thesis runs counter to Kantian moral philosophy by its opposition to providing a universalistic rule-based account of morality. The constitution thesis in this sense is related to virtue-ethics which emphasizes the importance of moral education and following moral masters for knowing moral duties. The kind of moral knowledge that we need, according to this view, is not captured by some universal principles; rather, it requires the virtue of *phronesis* as practical intelligence which lets us know moral features that are at stake in particular situations. These are the two main features which we can affirm that the constitution thesis conveys, that is, its anti-epistemological and virtue-ethical aspects.

These two aspects contain insights for today's social and moral world; one is epistemological and the other is moral. The epistemological insight is the relief that we do not need to find out substantial self-evident principles at the beginning of our intellectual enquiries. This would save people from what MacIntyre (2006a, p.12) calls "mental breakdown", that is, doubting at

once all our existent beliefs in order to construct our beliefs from self-evident principles. Instead, we proceed from our received beliefs and a mind that is shaped in a framework, without trying to build our system from scratch on principles that are acceptable to all people. This provides individuals with a sense of certitude that is psychologically very fruitful; however, we should recall MacIntyre's emphasis that this certitude should be open to revision, though its positive point is that it does not require the Cartesian insight of starting from ideas indubitable to all rational persons.

The moral insight that we can gain from MacIntyre's discussion is the emphasis that he lays upon our social aspects and the obligations that we owe to each other. As was discussed in the course of the thesis, in MacIntyre's view, the common good is indispensable to the individual good, and the individual by observing this would acquire the required incentive to commit himself to the good of others and of the community, knowing that there is in fact no dichotomy between these goods. This account of the good can be used to support an account of human rights and freedom that is more active and participatory than the classical liberal account allows.

The dominant view of human rights in the classical liberal tradition considers these rights as immunities from others' coercion and interference; while the positive account of rights, which can be inferred from MacIntyre's kind of discussion, takes rights as empowering mechanisms that actively engage individuals in public life. There are parallels here with D. Hollenbach's (1994) account of the modern Catholic account of human rights expressed in the Second Vatican Council; as Hollengach (1994, p.142) states:

> This way of interpreting freedom of speech and religion views immunity from interference in these domains as in service of active participation in the public life of society. People should be free to express their political and religious beliefs in public in order that the true nature of the common good of the community might be more adequately understood and pursued.

305

MacIntyre's emphasis on the essentiality of the notion of the common good for individual goods can support this active account of human rights, which in turn can balance the negative view of human rights and freedom.

Another moral insight which we can acquire from MacIntyre is the social aspect that he gives to individual autonomy. As was explained in the previous chapter, in MacIntyre's view, we achieve autonomy only through our social practices and by learning our good in our social interactions with those others who are more virtuous or wiser than us. This subjection of our personal desires to the knowledge and experience of the wise can prove very precious in our individual and social lives, as this would let us lead our life as an unrepeatable experience more efficiently. These two aspects, that is, the epistemological insight that we cannot start from self-evident substantial principles, and the emphasis on the common good and our moral obligations to each other are important lessons which we can take from MacIntyre. However, we should be cautious of possible misunderstandings of MacIntyre's constitution thesis, the two most salient of which are as follows.

The first is to think of traditions as closed entities that have incomparable ideas and ways of life. MacIntyre has been aware of this problem from which he has distanced himself by rejecting the charges of relativism and perspectivism and also the label of communitarianism. The individual, as was argued in chapter 4, though he is constituted in a given tradition, has the capacity to reflect on his identity and learn from other traditions, and if necessary gradually revise his positions and identity. As I explained in chapter 2, the terminology of "constitution" is too heavy for this meaning, and other expressions such as tradition-directed or guided or related rationalities are more appropriate ones, as they do not have these relativistic and perspectivistic connotations. A related misunderstanding is to interpret MacIntyre along the lines of philosophy after the linguistic turn which denies the possibility of avoiding the limitations of language to know reality as it is.

The second misunderstanding or misuse of the constitution thesis is to justify oppressive policies on the grounds that there are no universal norms of human conduct across traditions. MacIntyre's opposition to the idea of human rights subjects him further to this misappropriation. To dispel this, I argued that we should recognize some rights and norms for human beings *qua* human beings independent of their accounts of the good and their other loyalties. In fact, MacIntyre's espousal of the precepts of the natural law as conditions necessary for human normal functioning requires him to revise his attitude to the idea of human rights. Basic human needs and their intellectual need for rational justification can provide a minimum universal platform for protecting human beings against different kinds of mistreatments and vulnerabilities.

After this recapitulation of the main points of the discussion, I shall return to the theological questions that I raised in the introduction to the thesis as my initial incentives to conduct this research, trying to answer them based on the kind of approach I have adopted in this work. To recall, I stated that my interest in MacIntyre's work has its roots in my engagement with some questions in the area of the philosophy of religion. One question was whether there is some measure for the justice of God independent of His decree. In the light of my discussion in the previous chapter regarding the necessity of some basic goods for human beings *qua* human beings, I argue here that these goods also hold for human beings in their interaction with God. The explanation is that if we consider God as a reasonable and rational Being, which is implied by his attribute as being wise, it would follow that His judgments should be based on some norms which are independent of His word, as is the case also with other rational and reasonable beings. By rationality here I mean His creation has a meaningful design and purpose such that nothing has been created in vain; therefore, human beings and their capacities have a purpose, and should be developed. If human beings have an intellectual capacity, this should be respected and developed in order to avoid absurdity. A part of this development is to consider human beings as being able to understand the grounds of what they are supposed to believe or to act upon, and that they are entitled to

307

justification in this regard. This does not rule out that they should also educate some of their desires and emotions, or follow some moral exemplars in order to be able to understand practical or theoretical issues; however, they should understand why they do so. Accordingly, God as a wise and rational Being cannot dictate that I am just but you cannot access the measures of my justice, and whatever I do is the measure of justice. Neither can He order a normative system whose grounds are not at all justifiable to human beings. MacIntyre also would accept my argument here, as he holds that we need to have measures of justice independent of and prior to the authority of divine commands in order to be able to distinguish between false gods and the true God (1986b, p.374).MacIntyre (1986b, p.361) also states that an essential characteristic of the Judaeo-Christian God, and in my view of Islam's God, is that "He is just and that He cannot possibly not be". We should note that this "cannot" does not count as a limitation upon God's absolute power, because these requirements stem from His intrinsic attributes such as being wise, etc. To act unwisely is a contradiction for God and cannot be the subject of his power.

By reasonableness here I mean that God treats human beings and His other creations fairly; that is to say, His expectations of them are proportionate to the capacities they have, as the following verses from the Quran also indicate, "Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability" (Quran 2:286, Shakir Translation); also, "[Allah] has not laid upon you an hardship in religion" (Quran 22:78, Shakir Translation).

The consideration of human beings' limitations is such that it, indeed, in some cases has led to the revision of some verdicts by God Himself; for instance, the forbidding of spouses' sexual intercourse on the nights of the fasting month of Ramadan has been annulled by God due to the fact that its observance has been too difficult for people, leading them to revise it; as the verse indicates: "It has been made lawful for you to go to your wives on the night of the fast: they are like a garment for you, and you are like a garment

for them. God is aware that you were deceiving yourselves and He has turned in mercy towards you and pardoned you (Quran 2:187, Wahiduddin Khan Translation)".[51]

Another example of the consideration of human beings' capacities by God, as a reasonable entity, can be seen in the four-step gradualist prohibition of drinking intoxicants, in order to pave the way and prepare the people for this verdict. In the first step, intoxicants were only compared to good provision and nourishments (Quran 16:67); in the second step, the intoxicated were asked not to approach prayer until they know what they say (Quran 4:43); as a third step, it was pointed out that the sin of drinking intoxicants outweighs its benefits (Quran 2:219); and finally in the fourth step it was introduced as a deed of Satan, and was more strongly prohibited. This gradualist attitude attests to the fact that changing individual and social habits is a difficult and time-consuming effort. Thus, if human beings have some capacities and limitations, which are largely the same across cultures, this would set some limits for the scope of obligations that any reasonable legislator, including God, can justly ordain upon them. Accordingly, even if we might not be able to understand the whole justice of God due to our limited knowledge, basic features of human beings including their basic physiological and intellectual needs can be a measure of the justice of God, and also a measure of the true understanding of His verdicts.

As human basic needs are time-bound issues, in the sense that by the passage of time there might appear new understandings about human beings' basic needs, this would provide some measures for streamlining our understanding of religion. Some ideas about human rights, such as freedom of conscience, which address human basic needs, can play the same function. Accordingly, human basic needs and features, which include their inherent dignity, can be used to evaluate different traditions' treatment of human beings, as well as providing a developing understanding of religion. This is in line with the *Ejtehad* method in *Shia* Islam as a method for an

---

[51]A question might arise that why God has not foreseen this issue, but this is not my concern here.

understanding of religion that is responsive to the requirements of the time. Accordingly, my effort in this thesis was to provide a rational justification, in so far as is possible, for a universal morality that is also compatible with human beings' cultural divergences. This account of morality would regulate our relationships in conditions in which we lack a shared account of the good life. Considering human beings' basic needs is required of any reasonable moral agent in order to respect the dignity of human beings as rational beings.

VIII- Bibliography

Anderson, R.L., 2005. Nietzsche's Will to Power as a Doctrine of the Unity of Science. *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, 10(1), pp.77-93.

Annas, J., 1989. MacIntyre on Traditions, a Review of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 18(4), pp.388-404.

Annas, J., 2005. Virtue Ethics: What Kind of Naturalism. In S.M. Gardiner, ed.*Virtue Ethics*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp.11-29.

Aquinas, T., 1274. *The Summa Theologica. Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. (Benziger Bros. edition, 1947)*. [Online] Available from:<http://dhspriory.org/thomas/summa/index.html> [Accessed April 05 2012].

Aquinas, T., *Questiones Disputatae de Veritate* 1.4.trans. R.Mulligan, J. McGlynn, W. Schmidt. Ed. J Kenny. [online] Available from: <http://dhspriory.org/thomas/QDdeVer.htm> [Accessed March 03 2012].

Aquinas, T., *On the Uniqueness of Intellect against Averroists.* [Online] Available from <http://dhspriory.org/thomas/DeUnitateIntellectus.htm> [Accessed May 18 2012].

Aristotle., *Nicomachean Ethics.* Trans. W. D. Ross, 1966. [Online] Available from:<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.2.ii.html> [Accessed March 05 2012].

Aristotle., *Politics*, 1999, Tran. Benjamin Jowett, Batoche Books

Aristotle.*Metaphysics*,trans.W.D.Ross. [Online] Available from:<http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/metaphysics/contents.html> [Accessed March 03 2012].

Armstrong, D.M., 1978. *Universals and Scientific Realism: Nominalism and Realsim*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

St. Augustine., *The City of God*. Trans. D. D. Marcusdods. Ed. P. Schaff. [Online] Available from: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102>[Accessed April 07 2012].

Baghramian, M., 2004. *Relativism*. London and New York: Routledge.

Baker, L.R., 1984. On the Very Idea of a Form of Life. *Inquiry*, 27, pp.277-89.

Barry, B., 1989. The Light that Failed? Review of Whose Justice? Which Rationality?. *Ethics*, 100(1), pp.160-68.

Bellantoni, L., 2000. *Moral Progress: a Process Critique of MacIntyre*. Albany: The State University of New York Press.

Bernstein, R., 1992. *The New Constellation: The Ethical-Political Horizons of Modernity/Postmodernity*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Borradori, G., 1994. *The American Philosopher : Conversations with Quine, Davidson, Putnam, Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell, MacIntyre, and Kuhn*. Translated by R. Crocitto. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Brower, J.E. & Brower-Toland, S., 2008. Aquinas on Mental Representation: Concepts and Intentionality. *Philosophical Review*, 117(2), pp.193-243.

Burns, T., 2011. Revolutionary Aristotelianism? The Political Thought of Aristotle, Marx, and MacIntyre. In P. Blackledge & K. Knight, eds. *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism*. Indiana: the University of Notre Dame Press. pp.35-54.

Campbell, R., 1992. *Truth and Historicity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Clifford, M., 2001. *Political Genealogy after Foucault*. London: Routledge.

Cohen, S.M., 1982. Thomas Aquinas on The Immateriality Reception of Sensible Forms. *The Philosophical Review*, 91(2), pp.193-209.

Colby, M., 1995. Moral Traditions, MacIntyre and Historicist Practical Reason. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* , 21(3), pp.53-78.

Coleman, J., 1994. MacIntyre and Aquinas. In J. Horton & S. Mendus, eds. *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp.65-91.

Dahl, N.O., 1991. Justice and Aristotelian Practical Reason. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51(1), pp.153-57.

D'Andrea, T.D., 2006. *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Devitt, M., 1996. *Coming to Our Senses: A Naturalistic Defense of Semantic Localism*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Devitt, M., 2009. Incommensurability and The Priority of Metaphysics. In *Putting Metaphysics First: Essays on Metaphysics and Epistemology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.143-57.

Dewan, O.L., 2004. Is Truth a Transcendental for St. Thomas Aquinas? *Nove et Vetera, English Edition*, 2(1), pp.1-20.

Doyle, T., 2001. Nietzsche's Justification of the Will to Power. *The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 11(2001), pp.79-102.

Dummett, M., 1990. The Source of the Concept of Truth. In G. Boolos, ed. *Meaning and Method: Essays in Honor of Hilary Putnam*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp.1-17.

Eardley, P.S. & Still, C.N., 2011. *Aquinas: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London & New York: Continuum.

Engelhardt, H.T. & Callahan, D., eds., 1977. *Knowledge, Value and Belief*. New York: Hastings Center.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 1965. *Theories of Primitive Religion*. Oxford: the Clarendon Press.

Feinberg, W., 1984. On After Virtue. *Theory and Society*, 13(2), pp.249-62.

Feldman, S., 1986. Objectivity, Pluralism and Relativism: A Critique of MacIntyre's Theory of Value. *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 24(3), pp.307-19.

Fergusson, D., 1998. *Community, Liberalism, and Christian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Forst, R., (2007) 2011. *The Right to Justification: Elements of a Constructivist Theory of Justice*. Translated by J. Flynn. New York: Columbia University Press.

Forst, R., 2002. *Contexts of Justice: Political Philosophy beyond Liberalism and Communitarianism, trans. J. M. M. Farrell*. California: University of California Press.

Frankena, W.K., 1983. MacIntyre and Modern Morality. *Ethics*, 93(3), pp.579-87.

Franks, J.M., 1991. Aristotle or Nietzsche? *Listening*, 26(2), pp.156-63.

Freeman, M., 1994. The Philosophical Foundations of Human Rights. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 16(3), pp.491-514.

Fuller, M., 1998. *Making Sense of MacIntyre*. Vermont: Ashgate.

Gadamer, H.G., 1975. *Truth and Method*. 2004, 4th ed. UK: Continuum.

George, R.P., 1989. Moral Particularism, Thomism, and Traditions. *The Review of Metaphysics*, 42(3), pp.593-605.

Gettier, E., 1963. Is Justified True Belief Knowledge? *Analysis*, 23, pp.121-23.

Gewirth, A., 1984. Rights and Virtues. *Analyse and Kritik*, 6(1), pp.28-48.

Gowans, C.W., 2011. Virtue Ethics and Moral Relativism. In S.D. Hales, ed. *A Companion to Relativism*. UK: Blackwell Publishing. pp.391-411.

Grant, W.M., 2006. Thomist or Relativist? MacIntyre's Interpretation of adaequatio intellectus et rei. In D.A. Ollivant, ed. *Jacques Maritain and the Many Ways of Knowing*. Washington: The Catholic University of AmericaPress. pp.102-20.

Gutmann, A., 1985. Communitarian Critics of Liberalism. *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 14(3), pp.308-22.

Habermas, J., 1994. *Justification and Application: Remarks on Discourse Ethics*. 2001st ed. Translated by C. Cronin. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Haldane, J., 1994. MacIntyre's Thomist Revival: What Next? In J. Haldane & S. Mendus, eds. *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp.91-108.

Haldane, J., 1999. Virtue, Truth and Relativism. In D. Carr & J. Steutel, eds. *Virtue Ethics and Moral Education*. London and New York: Routledge. pp.159-72.

Hales, S.D. & Welhon, R., 2000. *Nietzsche's perspectivism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Hare, R.M., 1989. A Reductio ad Absurdum of Descriptivism. In *Essays on Ethical Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon. pp.113-31.

Herdt, J.A., 1998. Alasdair MacIntyre's "Rationality of Traditions" and Tradition Transcendental Standards of Justification. *The Journal of Religion*, 78(4), pp.524-46.

Hibbs, T.S., 2007. *Aquinas, Ethics, and Philosophy of Religion: Metaphyscis and Practice*. Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Hofstadter, A., 1965. Truth of Being. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 62(7), pp.167-83.

Hollenbach, D., 1994. A Communitarian Reconstruction of Human Rights: Contributions from Catholic Tradition. In D. Hollenbach & R.B. Douglass, eds. *Catholicism and Liberalism: Contributions to American Public Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.127-50.

Hoy, D.C., 2009. *The Time of Our Lives: a Critical History of Temporality*. Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Hutcheson, F., 1738. *A System of Moral Philosophy, 2005, Continuum: London*.

Isaac, J.C., 1989. Review of Whose Justice? Which Rationality? *Political Theory*, 17(4), pp.663-72.

315

James, W., 1907. *Pragmatism and Common Sense: in Pragmatism (A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking).* [Online] http://www.authorama.com/pragmatism-6.html. [Accessed 9 July 2012].

Jenkins, J.I., 1991. Aquinas on the Veracity of the Intellect. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 88(11), pp.623-32.

Jenkins, J.I., 1997. *Knowledge and Faith in Thomas Aquinas.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, W.T., 1969. *The Medieval Mind: A History of Western Philosophy.* New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Jordan, M.D., 1986. *Ordering Wisdom.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

Kallenberg, B.J., 2001. *Ethics as Grammar.* Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

Kallenberg, B.J., 2003. Positioning MacIntyre within Christian Ethics. In N. Murphy & B.J. Kallenberg, eds. *Virtues and Practices in the Christian Tradition: Christian Ethics After MacIntyre.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. pp.45-84.

Kant, I., 1785. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals.* Trans. M. J. Gregory, 1997. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kant, I., [1750s-1790s] 1997. *Lectures on Ethics.* Ed. P. Heath & J. B. Schneewind. Trans. P. Heath. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Knight, K., 2011. Revolutionary Aristotelianism. In P. Blackledge & K. Knight, eds. *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism.* Indiana: The University of Notre Dame Press. pp.20-35.

Krausz, M., 1984. Relativism and Foundationalism: Some Distinctions and Strategies. *The Monist*, 67, pp.395-404.

Krausz, M., 2007. *Interpretation and Transformation: Explorations in Art and the Self.* Amsterdam: Rodopi Publishers.

Kuhn, T., 1970. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Second ed. London: The University of Chicago Press.

Kuna, M., 2005. MacIntyre on Tradition, Rationality, and Relativism. *Res Publica*, 11, pp.251-73.

Kymlicka, W., 1989. *Liberalism, Community and Culture*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Louden, R.B., 1986. Kant's Virtue Ethics. *Philosophy*, 61(238), pp.473-489.

Lutz, C.S., 2004. *Tradition in the Ethics of Alasdair MacIntyre: Relativism, Thomism, and Philosoph*. The USA: Lexington Books.

MacDonald, S., 1993. Theory of Knowledge. In E. Stump & N. Kretzma, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas (Cambridge Companions to Philosophy)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.160-96.

Machan, T.R., 1998. *Classical Individualism: the Supreme Importance of Each Human Being*. London and New York: Routledge.

MacIntyre, A., 1957. The Logical Status of Religious Belief. In *Metaphysical Beliefs*. London: SCM Press LTD. pp.169-211.

........................, 1959a. Notes from the Moral Wilderness, II. *The New Reasoner*, (8), pp.89-98.

........................, (1960) 2008. Freedom and Revolution. In P. Blackledge & N. Davidson, eds. *Alasdair MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism: Selected Writings 1953–1974*. Boston: Brill. pp.123-35.

........................, 1962. A Mistake about Causality in Social Science. In P. Laslett & W.G. Runciman, eds. *Philosophy, Politics and Society (Second Series)*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell. pp.48-70.

........................, 1964. Against Utilitarianism. In S. Wiseman, ed. *Aims in Education: the Philosophic Approach*. Machester: Machester University Press. pp.1-23.

........................, 1966. *A Short History of Ethics*. The 1998 ed. London: Routledge.

........................, 1971a. Rationality and the Explanation of Action. In *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy*. London: Duckworth. pp.244-60.

........................, 1971b. Some More about "Ought". In *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy*. London: Duckworth. pp.157-73.

........................, 1972. Justice: New Theory and Some Old Questions, a Review of *A Theory of Justice* by J. Rawls. *Boston University Law Review*, 52, pp.330-34.

........................, 1975. How Virtues Become Vices: Medicine and Society. *Encounter*, 45(1), pp.11-17.

........................, [1977]1981b. Can Medicine Dispense with a Theological Perspective on Human Nature? In D. Callahan & T. Engelhardt, eds. *The Roots of Ethics: Science, Religion, and Values*. New York: Plenum Press. pp.119-38.

........................, [1978]1985. The Right to Die Garrulously. In R.L. Purtill, ed. *Moral Dilemmas: Reading in Ethics and Social Philosophy*. Wadsworth: Belmont. pp.129-35.

........................, 1978. How to Identify Ethical Principles. In *The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research I*. Washington: (DHEW pub. no. (OS) 78-0013). pp.1-10.

........................, 1980. Regulation: A Substitute for Morality. *The Hastings Centre Report*, 10(1), pp.31-33.

........................, 1981. *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*. 3rd ed. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

........................, 1982a. Intelligibility, Goods, and Rules. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 79(11), pp.663-65.

........................, 1982b. How Moral Agents Became Ghosts? *Synthese*, 53(2), pp.295-312.

........................, 1983a. Moral Rationality, Tradition, and Aristotle: a Reply to Onora O'Neill, Raimond Gaita, and Stephen R. L. Clark. *Inquiry*, 26(4), pp.447–66.

........................, 1983b. Moral Philosophy: What Next? In A. MacIntyre & S. Hauerwas, eds. *Revisions: Changing Perspectives in Moral Philosophy.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. pp.1-15.

........................, 1985. Relativism, Power and Philosophy, in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Association.* Newark, 1985. APA. pp.5-22.

........................, 1986a. The Intelligibility of Action. In R. M. Burian, J. Margolis & M. Kraus, eds. *Rationality, Relativism and the Human Sciences.* Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers. pp.63-80.

........................, 1986b. Which God Ought We to Obey, and Why? *Faith and Philosophy*, (3), pp.359-71.

........................, 1987a. The Idea of an Educated Public. In G. Haydon, ed. *Education and Values: The Richard Peters Lectures.* London: University of London, Institute of Education. pp.15-36.

........................, 1987b. Can One Be Unintelligible to Oneself? In C. McKnight & M. Stchedroff, ed. *Philosophy in Its Variety: Essays in Memory of Fran çois Bordet.* Blefast: Queen's University of Belfast. pp.23-37.

........................, 1988a. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

........................, 1988b. Sophrosune: How a Virtue Can Become Socially Disruptive. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 13, pp.1-11.

........................, 1990a. *Three Rival versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press.

........................, 1990b. The Privatization of Good: An Inaugural Lecture. *Review of Politics*, 52(3), pp.344–61.

........................, 1990c. The Return to Virtue Ethics. In R. E. Smith, ed. *The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Vatican II: A Look Back and a Look Ahead.* Maryland: The Pope John Centre. pp.239-49.

........................, 1991a. How to Seem Virtuous Without Actually Being So. Centre for the Study of Cultural Values, Lancaster University, Occasional Papers Series.

........................, 1991b. Incommensurability, Truth, and the Conversation Between Confucians and Aristotelians About the Virtues. In E. Deutsch, ed. *Culture and Modernity: East-West Philosophic Perspectives.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press. pp.104-22.

........................, 1991c. Community, Law, and the Idiom and Rhetoric of Rights. *Listening: Journal of Religion and Culture,* (26), pp.96-110.

........................, 1992a. What Has "Not" Happened in Moral Philosophy. *Yale Journal of Criticism,* 5(2), pp.193-99.

........................, 1992b. Utilitarianism and the Presuppositions of Cost-Benefit Analysis. In J.M. Gilroy & M. Wade, eds. *The Moral Dimmensions of Public Policy Choice: Beyond the Market Paradigm.* Pittsburgh and London: Pittsburgh University Press. pp.179-94.

........................, 1992c. Virtue Ethics. In L.C. Becker & C.B. Becker, eds. *Encycclopedia of Ethics.* New York: Garland Publishers. pp.1276-82.

........................, 1993. *The Objectivity of Good: The Kathryn Fraser Mackay Lecture for 1988.* New York: St. Lawrence University.

........................, 1994a. Kinesis Interview with Professor MacIntyre, interview by T.D. Pearson. *Kinesis: Graduate Journal in Philosophy,* 20(1), pp.34-47.

........................, 1994b. A Partial Response to My Critics. In J. Horton & S. Mendus, eds. *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre.* Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers. pp.283-305.

........................, 1994c. Nietzsche or Aristotle?. In G. Borradori. *The American Philosopher:Conversations with Quine, Davidson, Putnam,*

Nozick, Danto, Rorty, Cavell, MacIntyre, and Kuhn. Translated by R. Crocitto. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

..........................., 1995. *Marxism and Christianity*. 3rd ed. London: Duckworth Co. Ltd.

..........................., 1997. Review of Aquinas's Theory of Natural Law: An Analytic Reconstruction, by Anthony J. Lisska. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 37(145), pp.95-99.

..........................., 1998a. The Theses on Feuerbach: A Road Not Taken. In K. Knight, ed. *The MacIntyre Reader*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. pp.223-35.

..........................., 1998b. Politics, Philosophy and the Common Good. In K. Knight, ed. *The MacIntyre Reader*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. pp.235-55.

..........................., 1998c. Aquinas' s Critique of Education: Against His Own Age, Against Ours. In A.O. Rorty, ed. *Philosophers on Education: Historical Perspectives*. London and New York: Routledge. pp.95-108.

..........................., 1998d. Practical Rationalities as Forms of Social Structures. In K. Knight, ed. *The MacIntyre Reader*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. pp.120-135.

..........................., 1999a. *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*. Chicago: Open Court.

..........................., 1999b. Social Structures and their Threat to Moral Agency. *Philosophy*, (74), pp.311- 329.

..........................., 1999c. Moral Pluralism without Moral Relativism. In Brinkmann, K., ed. *The Proceedings of the Twentieth World, Volume 1: Ethics*. Bowling Green, 1999c. Philosophy-Doc-Ctr.

..........................., 2000. Theories of Natural Law in the Culture of Advanced Modernity. In E.B. McLean, ed. *Common Truths: New Perspectives on Natural Law*. the USA: Intercollegiate Studies Institute. pp.91-115.

321

........................., October 11, 2001. *Personal Communication to K. Shrader-Frechette*. In Shrader-Frechette, K., 2002. Natural Rights and Human Vulnerability: Aquinas, MacIntyre, and Rawls. *Public Affairs Quaterly*, 16(2), pp.99-124.

........................., 2002. Alasdair MacIntyre on Education: In Dialogue with Joseph Dunne. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36(1), pp.1-19.

........................., 2006a. Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science. In MacIntyre, A. *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.3-24.

........................., 2006b. Colors, Cultures, and Practices. In *The Tasks of Philosophy, Sellected Essays: Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.24-52.

........................., 2006c. Moral Relativism, truth, and Justification. In *The Taks of Philosophy: Slected Essays, Vol.1*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp.52-74.

........................., 2006d. Moral philosophy and Contemporary Social Practice: What Holds Them Apart? In MacIntyre, A. *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Vol.1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.104–25.

........................., 2006f. First Principles, Final Ends and Contemporary Philosophical Issues. In *The Task of Philosophy: Sellected Essays, Vol 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.143-79.

........................., 2006g. Philosophy Recalled to Its Tasks: a Thomistic Reading of *Fides et Ratio*. In *The Taks of Philosophy: Sellected Essays, Vol 1*. New York: Cambridge University Press. pp.179-97.

........................., 2006h. Truth as a Good: a Reflection on *Fides et Ratio*. In *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Volume 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.197-216.

....................., 2006i. Rival Aristotles: Aristotle against Some Renaissance Aristotelians. In *Ethics and Politics: Sellected Essays, Vol 2.* New York: Cambridge University Press. pp.3-22.

....................., 2006j. Aquinas and the Extent of Moral Disagreement. In *Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Vol. 2.* New York: Cambridge University Press. pp.64-85.

....................., 2006k. Moral Dilemmas. In *Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Volume 2.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.85-101.

....................., 2006m. Truthfulness and Lies: What Can We Learn from Kant? In MacIntyre, A. *Ethics and Politics, Selected Essays, Volume 2.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.122-45.

....................., 2006O. Social Structures and Their Threat to Moral Agency. In MacIntyre, A. *Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Volume 2.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.186-205.

....................., 2006p. Toleration and the Goods of Conflict. In *Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Vol 2.* New York: Oxford University Press. pp.205-44.

....................., 2007. Prologue: After Virtue after a Quarter of a Century. In *After Virtue.* 3rd ed. Indiana: the University of Notre Dame Press. pp.ix-xvii.

....................., 2008. What More Needs to Be Said? A Begining, Although Only a Begining, at Saying It. *Analyse & Kritik*, 30(1), pp.261–76.

....................., 2009a. *God, Philosophy, Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition.* Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

....................., 2009b. Intractable Moral Disagreements. In L.S. Cunningham, ed. *Intractable Disputes about the Natural Law: Alasdair MacIntyre and Critics.* Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press. pp.1-53.

323

........................, 2009c. *On Having Survived Academic Moral Philosophy*. [Lecture Video]. Dublin: the UCD School of Philosophy.

........................, 2011. How Aristotelianism Can become Revolutionary: Ethics, Resistance, and Utopia. In P. Blackledge & K. Knight, eds. *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre's Revoltionary Aristotelianism*. Indiana: The University of Notre Dame Press. pp.11-20.

Markham, I., 1991. Faith and Reason: Reflections on MacIntyre's Tradition-Constituted Enquiry. *Religious Studies*, 27(2), pp.259-67.

Marx, K., 1845. *Theses on Feuerbach*. Trans. C. Smith, 2002. [online] Available from: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/index.htm>[Accessed April 05 2012].

Maxwell, M.P., 1993. A Dialectical Encounter Between MacIntyre and Lonergan on the Thomistic Understanding of Rationality. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 33(132), pp.385-99.

McDowell, J., 1979. Virtue and Reason. *Monist*, 63(3), pp.331-50.

McDowell, J. & McFetridge, I.G., 1978. Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives? *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes*, 52, pp.13-42.

Mead, G.H., [1934] 1964. The Self and The Organism. In A. Strauss, ed. *George Herbert Mead on Social Psychology: Selected Papers*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. pp.199-276.

Milbank, J., 2006. *Theology and Social Theory Beyond Secular Reason*. USA: Blackwell Publishing.

Miller, D., 1984. Virtues and Practices. *Analyse and Kritik*, 6(1), pp.49-60.

Miller, D., 1999. Communitarianism: Left, Right and Centre. In D. Avnon & A. De-Shalit, eds. *Liberalism and its Practice*. London: Routledge. pp.97-148.

Mitchell, M.T., 2006. Michael Polanyi, Alasdair MacIntyre, and the Role of Tradition. *Humanitas*, 19(1-2), pp.97-125.

Molesworth, W., 1962. *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes, Vol.2: Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society.* 1839th ed. London: Scientia Aslen.

Mosteller, T., 2006. *Relativism in Contemporary Philosophy.* London: Continuum.

Nagel, T., 1995. MacIntyre versus the Enlightenment. In *Other Minds: Critical Essays 1969-1994.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp.203-09.

Nickel, J.W., 1987. *Making Sense of Human Rights: Philosophical Reflections on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.* California: University of California Press.

Novaes, C.D., 2011. Theories of Truth. In H. Lagerlund, ed. *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy Between 500 and 1500.* London: Springer. pp.1340-47.

Nozick, R., 1974. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Nussbaum, M., 1988. Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach. *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, 13(1), pp.32-53.

Nussbaum, M., 1989. Recoiling from Reason. *New York Review of Books*, pp.36-41.

Okin, S.M., 1991. *Justice, Gender, and the Family.* New York: Basic Books.

O'Neill, O., 1983. Kant After Virtue. *Inquiry*, 26, pp.387-405.

Pincoff, E.L., 1986. *Quandaries and Virtues: Against Reductivism in Ethics.* Kansas: The University of Kansas.

Polanyi, M., 1958. *Personal Knowledge: Toward a Post-Critical Philosophy.* Chicago : The University of Chicago Press.

Popper, K., 1994. *The Myth of the Framework.* London: Routledge.

Porter, J., 1993. Openness and Constraint: Moral Reflection as Tradition-Guided Inquiry in Alasdair MacIntyre's Recent Works. *The Journal of Religion*, 73(4), pp.514-36.

Porter, J., 2003. Tradition in the Recent Work of Alasdair MacIntyre. In M.C. Murphy, ed. *Alasdair MacIntyre: Contemporary Philosophy in Focus*. Cambrdige : Cambridge University Press. pp.38-69.

Prawat, R.S., 2003. The Nominalism Versus Realism Debate:Toward A Philosophical Rather Political Resolution. *Educational Theory*, 53(3), pp.275-311.

Putnam, H., 1995. Pragmatism, Relativism, and the Justification of Democracy. In J. Arthur & A. Shapiro, eds. *Campus Wars: Multiculturalism And The Politics Of Difference*. Colorado: Westview Press. pp.264-73.

Quine, W.V.O., 1960. *Word and Object*. USA: the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Rawls, J., 1993. *Political Liberalism*. 3rd expanded ed. New York: Columbia University Press.

Reames, K., 1998. Metaphysics, History, and Moral Philosophy: The Centrality of the 1990 Aquinas Lecture to MacIntyre's Argument for Thomism. *Thomist*, 62(3), pp.419-43.

Rescher, N., 2003. *Epistemology: An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge*. New York: State University of New York Press.

Roche, T.D., 1992. In Defence of Alternative View of the Foundation of Aristotle's Moral Theory. *Phronesis*, 37(1), pp.46-84.

Roque, A.J., 1991. Language Competence and Tradition-Constituted Rationality. *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 51(3), pp.611-17.

Rorty, R., 1982. Comments on Dennet. *Synthese*, 53(2), pp.181-87.

Rorty, R., 1989. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sandel, M.J., 1982. *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schneewind, J.B., 1982. Virtue, Narrative, and Community: MacIntyre and Morality. *The Journal of Philosophy*, 79(11), pp.653-63.

Scruton, R., 2003. In Defence of The Nation. In D. Matravers & J. Pike, eds. *Debates in Contemporary Politcal Philosophy: An Anthology*. New York: Routledge in Assocaition with the Open University. pp.271-86.

Shrader-Frechette, K., 2002. Natural Rights and Human Vulnerability: Aquinas, MacIntyre, and Rawls. *Public Affairs Quaterly*, 16(2), pp.99-124.

Smith, R.S., 2003. *Virtue Ethics and Moral Knowledge: Philosophy of Language After Macintyre and Hauerwas*. Burlington: Ashgate Publishing.

Stern, R., 1994. MacIntyre and Historicism. In J. Haldane & S. Mendus, eds. *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*. Cambridge: Polity Press. pp.146-61.

Stout, J., 1988. *Ethics after Babel: the Languages of Morals and Their Discontents*. The 1990 ed. the USA: James Clarck & Co Ltd.

Stratton-Lake, P., 2000. *Kant, Duty And Moral Worth*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, C., 1991. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. The 2003 ed. USA: Harvard University Press.

Trifiró, F., 2006. MacIntyre's Tensions: between anti-Liberal Foundations and anti-Foundational Liberalism. *Ethica & Politica*, VIII(2), pp.127-58.

Turnbull, C., 1973. *The Mountain People*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Wallace, J. & Wallace, R.J., 1989. Review of After Virtue: A Study of Moral Theory. *History and Theory*, 28(3), pp.326-48.

Walzer, M., 1983. *Spheres of Justice: a Defense of Plurality and Equality*. New York: Basic Books.

Weinstein, J.R., 2003. *On MacIntyre*. USA: Wadsworth.

Winch, P., 1964. Understanding a Primitive Society. *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 1(4), pp.307-24.

Wood, A., 2002. The Final Form of Kant's Practical Philosophy. In M. Timmons, ed. *Kant's Metaphysics of Morals: Interpretive Essays*. The USA: Oxford University Press. pp.1-23.

Wood, A.W., 2008. *Kantian Ethics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.