

Keynote Speakers' Abstracts

Prof. Alex Callinicos

Two Cheers for Enlightenment Universalism

Prof. Timothy Chappell

[*Radical disagreement: utopias and the art of the possible*](#)

Abstract

I begin this paper by examining what MacIntyre has to tell us about radical disagreements: how they have arisen, and how to deal with them, within a polity. I conclude by radically disagreeing with MacIntyre: I shall suggest that he offers no credible alternative to liberalism's account of radical disagreements and how to deal with them. To put it dilemmatically: insofar as what MacIntyre says is credible, it is not an *alternative* to liberalism; insofar as he presents a genuine alternative to liberalism, this alternative is not credible. (By "not credible" I mean both intellectually unconvincing, and also practically undesirable or unworkable. I mean "incredible", too.) In large part the credibility problems that I see for MacIntyre's project arise from the history on which he bases it; it is with this history that I begin. Reflection on MacIntyre's profound and subtle political philosophy thus fails to dislodge liberalism from its contemporary intellectual supremacy—a supremacy which I think liberalism has well earned. If anything, such reflection enhances the hegemony of liberalism still further. And a good thing too.

Emeritus Prof. Russell Keat

[*Ethics, Markets and MacIntyre*](#)

Abstract

MacIntyre's theory of practices and institutions has revived and enriched the critical evaluation of economic systems in ethical terms. In according primacy to the kinds of goods (and ills) they embody and generate he rejects the orthodox liberal principle of ethical neutrality, and in re-focusing our attention on the character of economic production he challenges the privileged status typically now given to consumption. In these and other respects his approach is more than welcome, and his conception of internal and external goods and their relationship to the virtues provides the basis for a major re-statement and ethical refinement of traditional socialist critiques of capitalism and other market systems. However, whilst broadly sympathetic to MacIntyre's project, I will argue that his ethical critique of market economies is not altogether persuasive. This is partly because it is unclear how far it is true that market systems necessarily subordinate internal to external goods - the central critical claim - and partly because the 'subordination' criterion is itself problematic. I shall concentrate on the latter problems, arguing both that MacIntyre's theory of goods is incomplete, in ignoring goods that are neither internal nor external, and that his antipathy towards liberalism prevents him from recognising the desirability of certain constraints on collective decisions about economic goods and relationships.

Prof. Anton Leist

[*Ends of Action, Ends of Life, Ends of Communities: How to be a Practical Functionalist Like MacIntyre*](#)

Prof. Cary J. Nederman

[Men at Work: Politics and Labour in Aristotle and Some Aristotelians](#)

Abstract

In Book 3 of his *Politics*, and again in Book 7, Aristotle makes explicit his disdain for the banausos (often translated "mechanic") as an occupation qualified for full civic life. This paper proposes to examine whether Aristotle possesses a sufficient philosophical grounding to support this exclusion from citizenship in a well-ordered constitutional regime (as opposed to, say, democracy). In particular, I wish to investigate whether (or how) Aristotle can justify this position in relation to the famous claim in Book 1 that human beings are "polis-dwelling animals" whose flourishing requires participation in political life. Are those who engage in work with their hands for money simply incapacitated thereby from the attainment of virtue (on the order of women, children and slaves)? This seems implausible, given the merely conventional (as opposed to natural) character of "banausic" enterprises. I plan to argue that some later European authors known for their Aristotelian sympathies, such as Brunetto Latini, Ptolemy of Lucca and Marsiglio of Padua, are actually more consistent and satisfactory theoretically in their insistence that the practice of a manual occupation or trade alone is an inadequate reason for excluding human beings from citizenship.

Prof. Sean Sayers

[MacIntyre and Modernity](#)

Abstract

In this paper I shall engage critically with MacIntyre's account of modernity from a Marxist perspective. I will argue that MacIntyre's view of modernity and modern morality is unduly negative and one-sided. MacIntyre is right to argue that modernity involves the fragmentation and compartmentalization of social

life compared with earlier forms of community. However, it is important to recognize that the impact of these developments has not been entirely negative. At the same time, they have led to the creation of new forms of social relation and new liberal and post-liberal values and ideals. In some important respects MacIntyre's critique of these developments is valuable and illuminating but I shall argue that his account does not do sufficient justice to the complex and contradictory character of modern social relations and moral values. Similarly, while acknowledging the problems inherent in the enlightenment project I will argue against MacIntyre's abandonment of this as a 'failure' and his attempt to return to an earlier Aristotelian model as the basis for moral and social thought. Rather than rejecting modernity and the enlightenment project, I will argue, we should affirm its core values of liberty, equality and community and work to realise them in the modern world. A more adequate picture of modernity provides some grounds to question MacIntyre's pessimism about the possibilities for this.