

Seminar Speakers' Abstracts

Andy Alexis-Baker

[Alasdair MacIntyre and Anarchism](#)

Abstract

In this paper, I seek to demonstrate that although there is some continuity between MacIntyre's early Marxism and his mature recent thought, MacIntyre's criticisms of Marxism often resemble anarchist critiques more so than any revised Marxist self-critique. They resemble anarchist critiques on a basic level that anarchism is an historical movement that arose in opposition to the specific forms of government and economics. Yet, there is a somewhat deeper affinity with anarchism in MacIntyre's Aristotelianism in his positing institutions against practices, which carries a permanent skepticism that resembles a type of philosophical anarchism. Nevertheless, I will argue that MacIntyre's Aristotelianism provides a corrective to most types of anarchism in providing it with a language to develop what it has long seen to be the solution to capitalist individualism and Marxist conformism. Yet MacIntyre's affinity with anarchism in rejecting the modern nation-state ought to commit him to a type of anarcho-pacifism as well.

Dr. David Anderson

[Liberalising MacIntyre](#)

Abstract

In this paper, I argue that MacIntyre does not, as he is sometimes supposed to do, invoke an ideal of organic harmony, either in the mythical past or as a realistic future goal. I show that deep-seated features of MacIntyre's philosophy, in particular his positions on intention and narrative, require that a view of a harmonious community is not merely contingently but necessarily unavailable to MacIntyre. I argue that this in turn means that MacIntyre can

give an account of rational disagreement that does more justice to the possibility of such disagreement. This raises the question, which MacIntyre does not explicitly address in his major works, of what a MacIntyrean community could look like. I argue that such a community must be more fissiparous and diverse, and perhaps more liberal, than MacIntyre seems at times to envisage.

Alex Bavister-Gould

[*The Uniqueness of After Virtue \(or "Against Hindsight"\)*](#)

Abstract

The paper questions the extent to which MacIntyre's current ethical and political outlook should be traced to a project begun in *After Virtue*. It is argued that, instead, a critical break comes in 1985 with his adoption of a ' Thomistic Aristotelian' standpoint. *After Virtue*'s ' positive thesis' , by contrast, is a distinct position in MacIntyre's intellectual journey, and the ' standpoint' of *After Virtue* embodies substantial commitments not only in conflict with, but antithetical to, MacIntyre's later worldview—mostly clearly illustrated in the contrasting positions on moral conflict and tragedy.

Ron Beadle and Samantha Coe

[*Could we know a practice-based community if we saw one?*](#)

Abstract

In this paper we consider the possibilities for practice-based community (MacIntyre 1985, MacIntyre 1988, MacIntyre 1999) in contemporary social orders given Knight's argument that it is ' only in discrete communities of practice ... that most people have the opportunity to cultivate virtue and practical reasoning.' (1998: 23-24). In particular we address the differences entailed by conceiving of the practice -based community as a distinctive

category or as a kind of shorthand for a set of dimensions against which to judge actual existing communities. Drawing on ongoing research using MacIntyre's ideas in the context of the traditional circus (Beadle 2003, Beadle and Kőnyő t 2006, Beadle 2007) alongside Coe's PhD research in a musical facility we will discuss the issue of method and the status of empirics more generally in considering whether we can meaningfully talk of a practice based communities existing within the modern social order.

Dr. Roger Bergman

[*Teaching Justice After MacIntyre: Toward a Catholic Philosophy of Moral Education*](#)

Abstract

How is the commitment to social justice sustained over a lifetime? This would seem to be a matter of character, and that calls attention to the Aristotelian tradition in ethics. No one to my knowledge provides as much insight into the challenge of the contemporary appropriation of this tradition as Alasdair MacIntyre. Although a moral philosopher rather than a moral educator, MacIntyre's critique of the failure of the Enlightenment project to construct a rationally-based universal ethic, coupled with his critique of the modern nation-state of liberal capitalism as antithetical to the practice of virtue for the common good, provides a challenging if controversial context in which moral educators might think about justice pedagogy today.

Prof. Andrius Bielskis

Teleology and Utopia in Alasdair MacIntyre's Political Thought

Abstract

Alasdair MacIntyre is famous for his rejection of the institutions of the liberal nations-state. He extends his philosophical critique of the Enlightenment

project to the sphere of contemporary politics and rejects liberalism and the institutions of liberal democracy on the grounds that it is the political embodiment of the project of modernity. In this paper I will explore some of the philosophical implications of this rejection. I will focus on MacIntyre' s teleology arguing that besides Aristotelian teleology (a metaphysical biology of some sort) there is also a utopian element to it. If the politics of the liberal nation-state cannot embody an Aristoteleian politics of common good, then MacIntyre' s conception of politics of small-scale local communities can be seen as having a utopian element. That is, the best life is not only yet to be attained, but that it is the business of daily life to strive towards the best communal life possible. I will finish the paper suggesting that a local parish or a local Christian *Ekklesia* could be the locus where such politics of common good may be possible.

Dr. Paul Blackledge - [*Alasdair MacIntyre, Social Practices and Ethical Anti-Capitalism*](#)

Abstract

If Alasdair MacIntyre' s concept of practice was articulated, in part, as a response to perceived weaknesses with Marx' s account of working-class praxis, it subsequently came to sit at the core of his mature conception of the ontological basis for virtuous resistance to capitalism and liberalism. Nevertheless, whereas MacIntyre has gestured towards concrete instances of practices, and while he has suggested avenues for sociological and historical research into the types of communities that have fostered the virtues, in his own work he has not moved beyond these tentative remarks. In this essay, I aim, through the medium of a discussion of his critique of Marxism, to point, first, to the continuities between MacIntyre' s youthful Marxism and his more mature thought, before, second, problematising his concept of practice through an immanent critique of its use in some of his mature works.

Prof. Bill Bowring

[Misunderstanding MacIntyre on Human Rights](#)

Abstract

In *After Virtue*, pages 66-70, Alasdair MacIntyre famously assaults the contemporary discourse of "rights attaching to human beings simply *qua* human beings". He selects Gewirth (*Reason and Morality*, 1978), and Dworkin (*Taking Rights Seriously*, 1976), in order to show that "there are no such rights, and belief in them is one with belief in witches and in unicorns." As a result of these arguments, MacIntyre has become something of a straw man for human rights theorists/apologists. Michael Freeman selects MacIntyre as someone who asserts that human rights doctrine is false; the belief in human rights is an ontological error. According to Freeman, "MacIntyre misses his target, and the target he misses is a non-foundationalist dense of rights." In his more recent textbook [\[1\]](#), he contends that MacIntyre's mistake is to think of "human rights" as "things" that we could "have" as we have arms or legs. Freeman's answer is that rights are not *things*, but *just claims or entitlements*. Thus, this "...defeats MacIntyre's objection that belief in human rights is superstitious, for there is nothing superstitious in thinking what human beings may be entitled to." Upendra Baxi characterised MacIntyre's position as "human rights weariness - a kind of moral fatigue with rights languages and logics, marked by an ethical disposition that contests the very notion of human rights as a moral language and rhetoric." [\[2\]](#) Conor Gearty, in the recent Hamlyn Lectures, says: "I think MacIntyre as wrong to hanker after a now impossible Aristotelian virtue but he was right that something needs to be done." [\[3\]](#) It does indeed. This paper suggests that these authors and others have missed the point about MacIntyre. A case can be made for an Aristotelian, substantive account of human rights; a case that is thoroughly historicised, but restores human rights to their proper status as always scandalous, the product of, and constantly reanimated by, human struggle.

[1] Michael Freeman *Human Rights: An interdisciplinary approach* (Polity, 2002)

[2] Upendra Baxi *The Future of Human Rights* (Oxford, 2002), p.51-2

[3] Conor Gearty *Can Human Rights Survive?* (Cambridge, 2006), p.57-58

Dr. Keith Breen

[Work and Emancipatory Practice: Towards a Recovery of Human Beings' Productive Capacities](#)

Abstract

This article argues that productive work represents a mode of human flourishing unfortunately neglected in much current political theorizing. Focusing on Habermasian critical theory, I contend that Habermas' s dualist theory of society, on account of the communicative versus instrumental reason binary which underpins it, excludes work and the economy from ethical reflection. To avoid this uncritical turn, we need a concept of work that retains a core emancipatory referent. This, I claim, is provided by Alasdair MacIntyre' s notion of ' practice' . The notion of ' practice' is significant in suggesting an alternative conception of human productivity that is neither purely instrumental nor purely communicative, but rather both simultaneously, a form of activity which issues in material products and yet presumes a community of workers engaged in intersubjective self-transformation. However, we can endorse MacIntyre' s notion of ' practice' only if we reject his totalizing anti-modernism and insist on the emancipatory potentialities of modern institutions.

Prof. Tony Burns

The Conservatism of Aristotle's Political Thought: Ethics, Resignation and the Rejection of Utopia

Abstract

The theme of this conference is Alasdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism: Ethics, Resistance and Utopia, and the publicity poster for the conference has pictures of Aristotle, Marx and MacIntyre on it. This suggests the idea of considering the relationship between the views of Aristotle, Marx and MacIntyre, focusing on the notion of 'revolutionary Aristotelianism.' We have three names to conjure with: Aristotle, MacIntyre and Marx. This generates three pairs and hence also three intellectual relationships which might be discussed. First there is the relationship between the views of MacIntyre and those of Aristotle. Second there is the relationship between the views of MacIntyre and those of Marx. And third there is the relationship between the views of Aristotle and those of Marx. The paper focuses on the first two of these issues.

Given Marx's presence on the publicity poster, it seems legitimate to infer that the use of the word 'revolutionary' in the conference title is intended as an allusion to Marx and Marxism. There seems to be an assumption that the only authentic 'revolutionary' position is that adopted by Marx and Marxists. No doubt anarchists would disapprove of this. This seems to me to be important first because MacIntyre's attitude towards Marxism is ambivalent and second because the views expressed by MacIntyre at times seem to me to be closer to classical anarchism than to Marxism. The final section of the paper considers the notion of 'revolutionary Aristotelianism.' The paper concludes by suggesting that even if it is accepted that MacIntyre's social theory is indeed a 'revolutionary' one, it is arguable that is not because of its associations with Marx and Marxism.

Dr. Gideon Calder

Ethics, Ontology and MacIntyre's 'Case of J'

Abstract

Recent ethical theory has tended either to deny or to swerve around ontological questions concerning both human nature and the social world. MacIntyre offers a welcome exception: he attempts to grapple with precisely those questions about human nature, social contexts, and the relation between the two which fall outside the radar of the mainstream traditions. In this paper I argue that this opens up critical space in which the overlap of ethics with neighbouring fields can be enhanced for emancipatory purposes. But I also argue that, as his ethical thinking has refined itself, so MacIntyre's attention to social theory has thinned out. A standard charge levelled against his 'take' on ethics since *After Virtue* is that it rests on an undialectical nostalgia for a pre-modern age, and for thinkers - Aristotle, Aquinas - whose purchase is lost in a postmodern one. There is something in this charge. But rather than damning MacIntyre's project, or Aristotelianism, it implies instead that it requires supplementation, through incorporation of a recent insights in social theory. On these lines, through a discussion of MacIntyre's treatment of the 'case of J' in his 1999 paper 'Social Structures and their Threats to Moral Agency', I will argue that insights from Margaret Archer's critical realism would provide a helpful complement to the welcome attention to nature and biology in *Dependent Rational Animals*.

Dr. Bob Cannon

MacIntyre, Morality and Modernity: On the Authoritarian Status of Aristotelian Ethics

Abstract

In this paper I argue that MacIntyre's Aristotelianism far from offering a revolutionary critique of capitalism offers an authoritarian account of what-it-

means-to-be-human. The Aristotelian contrast MacIntyre makes between humanity-as-it-happens-to-be and humanity-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-true-potential assumes an essentialist standpoint which, as MacIntyre acknowledges, modernity invalidates. Firstly, by introducing a social and historical element into what makes us human and secondly by rendering ethical autonomy the only legitimate basis for identity-formation. MacIntyre explores the difference that modernity makes to moral validity claims in relation to Hume's prohibition against deriving 'ought' propositions from 'is' statements. From this perspective, notes Charles Taylor, any theory based on an antecedent notion of the good as prescribed by nature is repugnant because it does not exalt the freedom of the subject but pre-empts it. Given that capitalism is unjust because it violates the modern norm of ethical autonomy then only the latter can ground a revolutionary critique of the former.

Neil Davidson

[Was Alasdair MacIntyre Ever a Trotskyist?](#)

Abstract

Alasdair MacIntyre's turn to Marxism in 1958/9 was initially set out in a series of articles for non-aligned journals of the left (*Universities and Left Review*, *The New Reasoner*) and - more obliquely - in professional academic journals (*Philosophy*). At this stage his reference points within the Marxist tradition were universally agreed classics (Marx, Engels, Lenin) and he tended to treat Stalinism as a legitimate strand within the Marxist tradition. He never referred to Trotsky and was scathing about his contemporary followers ('all the dogmatism of the Stalinists without any of the achievements') Later in 1959, however, MacIntyre joined the Socialist Labour League, the most dogmatic of all the British Trotskyist organisations, and within a year had left them for the rather more unorthodox, but still recognisably Trotskyist International Socialists, with whom he remained until his public rejection of

Marxism in 1968. It was during the years when MacIntyre was most active in the Trotskyist movement that his greatest contributions to Marxism were written. Yet to what extent did MacIntyre ever embrace Trotskyism as a distinct set of theoretical positions within Marxism?. This paper will argue that, despite MacIntyre's personal admiration for Trotsky - which is apparent as late as the conclusion to *After Virtue* - his Marxist work is actually more heavily influenced by strands of 'Western Marxism' represented by Lukacs, Goldmann and Sartre.

Dr. Jason Edwards

[*State, Community and Association: The Associationalist Challenge to MacIntyre's Political Theory*](#)

Abstract

In this paper, I reject the claim that MacIntyre offers a revolutionary challenge to the liberal state and capitalism. His model of the kind of social form through which individuals and groups can achieve internal goods of excellence - the 'local community' - cannot be realised other than with the support of the state and the possibility of free exchanges of legally protected private property between individuals and groups. Indeed, at points in his work this is effectively acknowledged by MacIntyre. In modern societies, it is only the social association, as a body concerned both with goods of efficiency and goods of excellence, that can realistically balance individual liberty with the common pursuit of internal and external goods. Yet MacIntyre effectively ignores an entire modern 'tradition' - associationalism - concerned with how such a form of 'community' might operate in the present. I argue, then, that associationalism offers a much more revolutionary challenge to the centralised bureaucratic state and capitalist markets than does MacIntyre's political theory of local community.

Hilary Engward

[Stories in Practice: A Comparative Analysis of Situated Ethical Understanding in Student Nurses, Nurses, and Ethics Lecturers'](#)

Abstract

This paper reports the results so far of an inquiry into situated ethical understanding in student nurses, nurses and lecturers. Stories from student nurses, and discussion of these stories by student nurses, nurses and lecturers were used to access and describe the experience of ethics in practice. It was found that understandings differ between each group due to the contextual uniqueness of practice areas, that these differences are reflective of the professions and their differing practices, but also that individuals within the groups have different understandings of ethical values which are informed by such exposure. I suggest that until these differences are articulated, ethical understanding and teaching will fail to meet the lived ethical experience of practice.

Prof Horace L. Fairlamb

[The End of Humanity as We Know It: Redefining the Rational Animal](#)

Abstract

For decades Alasdair MacIntyre has challenged modern moral and political theories with alternatives intended to provide better accounts of virtue, tradition, and practical reason. His *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999) departs from earlier works by appealing to the biology of human nature for moral foundations. His argument shows the importance of dependence and vulnerability for questions of social responsibility. Despite its strengths, however, I find that its focus needs to be widened to include other aspects of a theory of justice. I analyze some of the more crucial shortcomings and propose some alternative ways of enlisting the biology of human nature to justify a more humane society.

Howard Feather

Rationality, Dialogue and Realization

Abstract

The paper examines the key notions of tradition, rationality and realization as they appear in MacIntyre's appropriation of Aristotle. It does this within a framework of hermeneutics and phenomenology. Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty are central to this, the former with regard to tradition and dialogue and the latter in relation to his comments on Aristotle and realization. Some reference will be made to Marxism, phenomenology and Lukacs treatment of realization.

The dialogical approach to realisation in Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty is, in short, compared for purposes of crucial elucidation with the Aristotelian view with a mind to extending the latter within a phenomenological reception of it. It is argued that the phenomenological investigation of tradition can offer a way forward for revolutionary rationality in that whilst the past offers the potential for social transformation via collective memory, sedimented experience and practice, it does so only in terms set by the historical present. The questions posed in the past about revolutionary transformation must be reformulated in the present if we are to recognize and make conscious the way that history works ' behind our backs' . In suggesting ways forward for progressive political practice. This means that tradition depends as much on the present as on the past (if it is to be a living tradition). Hence a different way of thinking through the existence of the past in the present is required and this can be achieved through elements of the work of Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty

Lucy Finchett-Maddock

[Utopia: The Telos of Radical Resistance](#)

Abstract

MacIntyre claims that we can work to make small communities that are capable of preserving the practices and virtues previously suffocated by the force of liberal capitalism, a reality. In this paper, my aim is to offer the radical movements of our time, as examples of such small communities. Each individual internalises a pure involvement in the 'practices' and virtues, through their everyday interactions, internal organization, and external protest. They are the living and breathing formulation of MacIntyre's utopist project. Utopia is the telos of their radical contention against convention. Looking specifically at the social centres and designated 'social spaces' within the East London area - attempts to re-capture the colonized commons from the claw of the modernist state - I shall attempt to advocate for the presence of genuine 'internal goods' within the actions and beliefs of these communities. These internal goods are the means through which every being can understand and achieve their potential. These spaces are arenas in which power is kept at the door, and potentialities are freed. Through looking at the practices and the virtues upheld, the hope is to explicate an extant embodiment of Alisdair MacIntyre's Revolutionary Aristotelianism.

Dr. Allyn Fives

[From Historicism to Localism: Alasdair MacIntyre's Political Theory](#)

Abstract

As a perfectionist, Alasdair MacIntyre holds the view that exercising the virtues is necessary to attain 'the good and the best' for humans. Also, as an historicist, he believes that practical reason is practice-based and that all theoretical enquiry is tradition-constituted and all traditions incommensurable. This paper argues that MacIntyre's historicism creates two sets of dilemmas:

either he must give up the claim that practical reason is practice-based, or else he must accept either conformism or arbitrariness; and either he must give up the claim that enquiry is tradition-constituted and traditions incommensurable, or else he must accept relativism/perspectivism, which is the thesis ' that no claim to truth made in the name of any one competing tradition could defeat the claims to truth made in the name of its rivals' . MacIntyre does offer a demanding ethic that is based on the virtue of just-generosity, and he does justify his proposals with an account of human flourishing and need. However, this paper argues that MacIntyre' s politics of the local community cannot avoid what he rightly takes to be the serious dangers of relativism, conventionalism, conformism, and undecideability, but also, MacIntyre' s political theory can be explained by his epistemology and ethical theory. An alternative perfectionist approach is offered, left-Aristotelianism, which rejects historicism and offers a defence of state welfarism.

Jonathan Floyd

[*Safety First: Adding Hobbes to Aristotle in MacIntyre' s Account of Interdependence*](#)

Abstract

In *Dependent Rational Animals*, Alasdair MacIntyre portrays for us a world in which each needs the assistance of others if they are to flourish as a human being. It is on the basis of this need that he argues in favour of our constructing and sustaining the sort of communities in which people are raised, not only to flourish themselves, but also to become the sort of people who are willing to assist others in times of need and vulnerability. If I am to be all that I can be as a human being then it is not enough that I possess certain virtues myself, it is also necessary that such virtues are found equally in my fellow citizens.

Hobbes, by contrast, portrayed a world in which each may kill the other. This vulnerability, along with the fear that it induced, would, but for the existence of some greater stabilising power such as the modern state, leave us with a world in which we spend most of our time unavoidably caught up in violence. MacIntyre's own argument in favour of the provision and sustenance of virtuous communities is, I argue here, itself insufficient to move people from where they are and from how they think right now inside the modern state. We have not, ourselves, been raised to be quite such virtuous citizens. Our world, in contrast to MacIntyre's vision, is still rather too individualist, and rather too bound up with short-term, materialist self-interest to be moved easily into the sort of condition so described. It might, however, be so moved if it were to be addressed in its own language- that is, if such a Hobbesian world were to be presented with a Hobbesian argument for the transformation of its current social arrangements. If people, as they are now, could be brought to see how their own existing interests might be served by such a transition, then such a transition might not seem nearly so quixotic to them as it would on the basis of certain other arguments, including MacIntyre's own. This paper is concerned with both the provision and the defence of just such an argument.

Dr. Benjamin Franks

Virtues and Anarchism: A non-essentialist account

Abstract

The aim of this paper is two-fold; first to describe a distinctive anarchist ethic based on contemporary scholarship, but also drawing from the historical canon; second, to locate this identifiable moral theory outside of the locale of consequentialist or deontological thinking where it is most usually placed, and to instead suggest that anarchism is more consistent with virtue ethics. To this end, the paper compares anarchism with the account of the virtues found in Alasdair MacIntyre's influential text *After Virtue*. A couple of criticisms of a virtue account of anarchism are described and assessed. These criticisms are

based on an apparent incompatibility between the virtues' commitment to community norms and the necessity for a framing teleology and anarchism's presumed rejection of these. Replies are explored to show that a virtue account of anarchism is a coherent, defensible alternative to the main Kantian versions.

Prof. Liam Harte

The Natural History of Tradition: A Critique of MacIntyre's Idea of an Epistemological Crisis

Abstract

It seems that MacIntyreanism can serve the purposes of radicals—understood as those aiming to bring about profound, unprecedented social change by revolutionary activism—if and only if epistemological crises can be initiated intentionally or their course, once initiated, is controllable. The logic of the idea of an epistemological crisis, however, supplies no reason to believe that such crises either can be initiated intentionally or are controllable once under way. So, MacIntyreanism thus offers standard radical praxis little but an uninspiring prescription to be opportunistic. On the other hand, an understanding of the notion of revolution as not only a rupture with the present but also a return to some tradition can provide us with a distinctively MacIntyrean notion of revolution against liberalism, and thus of MacIntyrean activism and radicalism.

Prof. James J. Kelly, Jr.

To Create a New Society Within the Shell of the Old: MacIntyre's Subversive Politics of the Local for Collaborative Lawyers in and of Communities

Abstract

In looking for theoretical guidance, practitioners of community development law face an unhappy choice between the business ideologies that dominate mainstream corporate law practice and postmodernist theories that offer tools for exposure of dominant structures but no basis for constructive response. With the articulation of Alasdair MacIntyre of a 'politics of self-defence'

based on his neo-Aristotelian craft ethic, the Community Economic Development can claim a vision and a strategy that combines radical critique with a foundation for sustained cooperative progress. Community lawyers also have a role in such work but one that requires fundamental rethinking of conventional approaches to advocacy and counsel.

Dr. Kelvin Knight

After Tradition?: Heidegger or MacIntyre, Aristotle and Marx

Abstract

What Heidegger and, still more, his followers intend by "Aristotelianism" differs radically from what is understood by MacIntyre. Whereas they identify it with "the tradition", and whereas Arendt regards this tradition to have ended, he regards it as continuing in rivalry to others. They characterize it as distinguishing practice from both theory and production, whereas he contests such distinctions. For him, unlike them, practices are social and are the schools of the virtues. Following Marx rather than Heidegger, MacIntyre opposes his revision of Thomistic Aristotelianism to the institutions of state and corporate capital. The Marx who MacIntyre follows is the Marx of 1844, and MacIntyre argues that Marxism was not defeated by its rivals but by its own abandonment of philosophy. What is to be done philosophically is the combination of a philosophy of social practice with the metaphysical first principles of a traditional teleology

Prof. Marian Kuna

MacIntyre's Search for a Defensible Aristotelian Ethics and the Role of Metaphysics

Abstract

MacIntyre is a major defender of the resurgence of the Aristotelian approach in ethical and political theory. He considers Aristotelianism not only a feasible, but also an intellectually superior alternative to most contemporary dominant ideologies, and to liberalism in particular. There is, however, an important and instructive modification to his view of what is admissible from Aristotle that should be accounted for. The paper traces MacIntyre's search for a

defensible restatement of the Aristotelian ethics and examines in particular his changing attitude to metaphysics as a basis for ethics within his project. Different stages of the development to his proposed Aristotelian alternative are analyzed and evaluated. The paper try to show that in spite of the fact that MacIntyre' s initially repudiated Aristotle' s metaphysical biology nevertheless his account has always been (implicitly or explicitly) metaphysical.

Dr. David Lorenzo Izquierdo

Alasdair MacIntyre: An Alternative to Individualism

Abstract

One of the most important points of Communitarianism is the critique to the liberal view of the self and Ethics and Politics, that is to say, the critique to an individualistic view of human being. MacIntyre' s thought has been studied from many points of view, but there is no research on his global critique and alternative to Individualism. For that reason, the aim of this paper is to study and to analyze such an alternative. The questions that we have to answer are two: (1) Which are the concepts on which MacIntyre bases his alternative to individualism? (2) Does this alternative overcome individualism? We divide the paper into five parts. In part I, we define the concept of ' Individualism' . In part II, we analyze MacIntyre' s concept of ' narrative person' . In part III, the concept of ' community' . In part IV, the concept of ' tradition' (' narrative rationality'). And finally, we dedicate part V to the conclusions.

Prof. Christopher Lutz

From Voluntarist Nominalism to Rationalism to Chaos: Alasdair MacIntyre' s Critique of Modern Ethics

Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to connect the " Disquieting Suggestion" at the beginning of *After Virtue* to a broader picture of Alasdair MacIntyre' s critique of modern moral philosophy. The essay begins with MacIntyre' s fictional scientific catastrophe, and uses four passages from the text of *After Virtue* to

identify the analogous real philosophical catastrophe. The essay relates the resulting critique of modern moral philosophy to MacIntyre's concern for recognizing the social practices of morality as human actions in "Notes from the Moral Wilderness." The essay concludes by considering the implications of MacIntyre's philosophy for the study of history, realism, and tradition.

Dr. Piotr Machura

MacIntyre's radical intellectualism: the Philosopher as a moral ideal

Abstract

The question I address in the paper is 'what is the ideal of MacIntyre's moral philosophy? what is the *telos* of human nature?' Considering MacIntyre's critique of modern culture, politics and philosophy, anti-intellectualism emerges as the main reason for his refutation of these values. So is it a reason for moral and political distortion that leads to the interpassivity of the modern self. Taking into account MacIntyre's idea of *characters* I pinpoint the *character* of the Philosopher as a moral ideal of MacIntyre's thought. For it is not only intellectual activity within any practice that enables us to develop our distinctively human nature but also philosophy that is the highest form of that kind of activity. From this point of view, it is crucial to grasp philosophy as a required way of life *and* the *craft* that enables us to be moral and political agents.

Dr. Sante Maletta

MacIntyre and the Subversion of Natural Law

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to put to the test MacIntyre's claim that natural law is *subversive*. Its main thesis is that in a liberal culture the natural law can be socially disruptive because its precepts enable the hitherto self-frustrated individuals to accomplish their own goods. The first section gives an outline of MacIntyre's conception of the natural law, stressing the similarity between the precepts of practical enquiry and the natural law. Then I identify the worst consequence of the modern refusal of the natural law in the production of self-frustrating social agents. In the third section I reconstruct MacIntyre's

criticism of liberalism as an ideology. The following section considers the possibility for a modern individual to respect the precepts of the natural law through the exercise of practical rationality within the practices of ordinary life. The perspective of the natural law opens up the possibility to look at politics with new eyes (last section).

Prof. Geoff Moore

Re-imagining the morality of management: a modern virtue ethics approach

Abstract

In this paper the problematic nature of the morality of management, evident in contemporary writers on management and management ethics, is explored. It is argued that the problem is, in fact, deeper than might at first seem to be the case, and that this stems from the underlying ethic of emotivism that characterises modernity (MacIntyre 1985). It is argued, however, that MacIntyre's own virtues-goods-practice-institution schema provides a way of re-imagining management and thus provides a resolution to the issue of the morality of management. Implications for management practice are drawn out.

Prof. Timothy Mosteller

MacIntyre's Epistemological Relativism and the Possibility of Human Flourishing

Abstract

This paper will explore Alasdair MacIntyre's views on epistemology as they relate to the possibility of human flourishing. The first section of the paper will trace MacIntyre's view of knowledge in his major works (especially *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*) in order to show that there are tendencies toward a problematic version of epistemological relativism. In the second part of the paper, I will argue that these tensions, founded on the concept of tradition dependent rationality may not be resolvable in ways that allow the kind of human flourishing that MacIntyre envisions. These tensions involve MacIntyre's commitment to both the concept that knowledge claims require tradition dependent standards of epistemic evaluation, and to the concept that there can be no neutral standards of epistemic evaluation

between competing epistemic traditions. Although MacIntyre claims that epistemic traditions can 'defeat' one another, I will argue that such an account has internal logical tensions that without proper modification lead to a form of logically self-defeating epistemological relativism. I will conclude with some thoughts as to how MacIntyre's epistemology can be modified towards a more non-relativistic epistemology such that human flourishing can be had.

Prof. Michael Muth

Why Resistance to Abortion is Part of a "Politics of Self-Defense"

Abstract

In "The Only Vote Worth Casting in November," Alasdair MacIntyre asks a seemingly simple question, "What do we owe our children?" whose answer, he claims, provides us with the bare outline of a politics, a politics that he claims "requires us to be pro-life" and demands a radical change in the nature of work and wages. I wish to examine MacIntyre's seemingly illiberal claim here – a focus on the family and resistance to abortion seem simply reactionary, very odd places to anchor a radical politics.

I wish to argue, however, that modern liberalism and personalist virtue accounts miss the truly radical nature of MacIntyre's virtue approach and its challenge to our thinking not just about individuals, but about the communities in which they live. Precisely because modern liberalism is unable to address abortion adequately, it makes abortion an important focal point for working out the radical politics that MacIntyre seeks. I will examine liberalism's failure with respect to abortion and the family and then begin to flesh out the connection between resistance to abortion and the need for a new politics built on a better understanding of human flourishing.

Prof. Jeffery L. Nicholas

Eucharist and Dragon Fighting as Ideological Resistance: Reason, Tradition, and Ideology Critique

Abstract

This paper examines traditions and practices as sites of ideological struggle. It begins with some definitions of ideology then moves into a discussion of

substantive reason. Reason is substantive because it arises within a tradition. The conceptions of the good and of the human person determine the standards of reason, by which reason may be used to evaluate ends, conceptions of the good, and reason itself. The Roman Catholic tradition provides an example to show how reason is substantive and how traditions can be sites of ideological contest. A further example of the practice of Dungeons and Dragons clarifies how substantive reason may, with other aspects of a practice, provide resistance to ideology. These examples allow one to dismiss certain misunderstandings of ideology as all-encompassing or merely material. Throughout, the essay defends MacIntyre's theory of a reason of tradition and his concept of practice from the charge of supporting oppression.

Dr. Niko Noponen

Alienation, Practices and Human Nature: Marxist Critique in MacIntyre's Aristotelian Ethics

Abstract

There is an important link from MacIntyre's later Aristotelianism to the Marxist critique of modern society. Marx's early studies about the modes of alienation relied on a conception of human nature that Marx was not able to explicate fully. Thus the critical Marxist view about the alienation is completed by MacIntyre by the account of practices, those forms of sociability which human beings in modern capitalist societies are tend to be alienated from. To argue for an Aristotelian ethics and conception of human nature in our times can be supported by the Marxist critique. Since without the latter we are not able to understand the ways modern capitalist society with its ideologies and institutions threatens the practices, and with them virtues, communal living, education and politics - that is, threatens human beings to realise their nature and live good lives.

Prof. Thomas Osborne - *MacIntyre, Thomism and the Contemporary Common Good*

Abstract

Alasdair MacIntyre's criticism of contemporary politics rests in large part on the way in which the political communities of advanced modernity do not recognize common goals and practices. I shall argue that although MacIntyre explicitly recognizes the influence of Jacques Maritain on his own thought, MacIntyre's own views are incompatible not only with Maritain's attempt to develop a Thomistic theory which is compatible with liberal democracy, but also relies on a view of the individual as a part which is related to the whole in a way that is incompatible with Maritain's understanding of the spiritual individual or person.

Dr. Emile Perreau-Saussine

The Moral Critique of Stalinism as an Origin of Contemporary Political Philosophy

Abstract

The situation today echoes the one recognised by former Communists in the wake of 1956, when the problem of 'having to get your hands dirty' arose with acuteness. Can one flout morality in the very name of morality? If a calculus of the interests of the genocide of minorities, can one still fall back on instrumental rationality? The unexpected success of Rawls' and Habermas' Neo-Kantianism is part and parcel of these debates: it puts forward the justification of individualism made necessary by the apparent collapse of utilitarianism. But the collapse of the Marxist idealism rebounds on the Enlightenment as a whole. How can one behave rationally? For a long time, socialism and communism seemed to provide an answer, by taking the fullest advantage of the premises of the Enlightenment. But after 1956? The so-called 'post-modernist' school replied to this question with a certain apparent clarity. 'We have to abandon the Enlightenment, and thus reason, which is fundamentally authoritarian,' it exclaimed in enthusiasm and despair. A third philosophical trend, best illustrated by Alasdair MacIntyre, neither Neo-Kantian nor post-modern but Neo-Aristotelian, attempts in more classical way to come to terms with the problem of the moral critique of Stalinism, asking

whether there is a political reality in which the notion of inviolable human rights can be reconciled with the requisite intellectual and moral virtues.

Mateja Pevec Rozman

Identification The Virtue With Knowledge: MacIntyre' s Attempt at Reasoning Ethics

Abstract

There are different and incompatible conceptions of virtue and through history we can see, that the relationship of virtues to the social order has changed. We can say that virtue is some kind of disposition to behave rightly. The Socratic thesis of identification knowledge with virtue is not a guarantee for acting virtues. Knowledge (interaction between universal knowledge and some appropriate piece of particular knowledge about the situation in hand), the right reason (phronesis) and the state of will (personal free willing decision) are components which leads a person to the right (virtues) actions. We also agree with Aristotle' s belief, that a view of how one should live, is not codifiable; one knows what to do, not only by applying universal principles but by being a certain kind of person: by being a virtues person.

Richard Poirier

Ushering in MacIntyre's Notions of Political Transformation in Modernity

Abstract

MacIntyre's asserted in 1976 that entry into the modern world was made with individualism and with the creation of specific types of economic and political institutions which belong to individualism. To be modern is in fact to participate in institutions of this kind and share these concepts. The modern economy, itself a kind of theory initially supplied by Smith and Ricardo, developed in England and became a model for all other economies. The modern state developed in Germany, initiated by Fichte and Hegel, came to become to some degree a model for all other states. Originating in relative independence of each other, the modern economy and the modern state are a mismatch and are necessarily at cross-purposes. This situation is exacerbated by the facts that advanced Western societies are oligarchies

disguised as liberal democracies and the major political parties have eliminated philosophy, e.g., first principles, as a component of debate in addressing the modern liberal state's debilitation in executing its limited theoretical role. Drawing upon my personal notes taken in a course by MacIntyre entitled "Morals, Politics and the Emergence of Modernity" at Boston University in 1976, his subsequent works, and a conversation I had with MacIntyre at the University of Notre Dame in November, 2006, I will present an assessment of the current dysfunctional paralysis in politics and why the timing may be right for MacIntyre's "ethics of human flourishing, politics of resistance and practical utopianism" to resonate with frustrated individuals constantly thwarted in their engagement in practices and attempts to achieve their telos.

Dr. Lee Salter

Communication Ethics and Systemic Distortion: Thoughts on Journalism as a Practice

Abstract

According to MacIntyre, a practice is ' a joint project in which goods internal to that project are realised in trying to achieve the standards of excellence which characterise it' . Institutions are posited as serving to underwrite the practice through the acquisition of ' external' goods and material resources. In this sense, the institution may support the practice. However, institutions also have the potential to corrupt the practice and subordinate it to the acquisition of external goods. The different goods pursued within a practice and by institutions can often set them against each other.

In this paper I will consider first whether journalism can be considered as a practice, and if so, how it is constituted and how it takes place. I then move on to consider the relationship between journalism as a practice, and its institutions, presenting evidence of the ' colonisation' of journalistic practice by external goods. This will enable me to consider the implication of the emergence of an ' occupational ideology' of journalism as opposed to a practice proper.

Finally I will consider how practices of journalism might be developed that both resist subsumption and challenge the ideological masquerade of 'professional' journalism under systemically distorted conditions.

Carey Seal

MacIntyre and the Polis

Abstract

Alasdair MacIntyre's criteria for the evaluation of moral traditions are historical: they succeed or fail on the basis of their ability to overcome the contradictions that present themselves over time. This paper will examine MacIntyre's practice of the philosophical historiography that arranges such crises as a narrative, taking as its focus his treatment, particularly in *A Short History of Ethics*, *After Virtue*, and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, of Greek thinkers before Aristotle (Homer, Theognis, Sophocles, Thucydides, Plato). The age of the polis, together with the closely related heroic period that preceded it, receives in MacIntyre's histories of ethics a uniquely inclusive treatment, one in which genres that are not explicitly philosophical are drawn upon to provide the sociological depth to his account. His treatment of the Greeks thus marks his fullest sustained approach to the reintegration of the history of ethics, and thus of moral philosophy itself, into its social, economic, and cultural matrix.

Dr. Raj Sehgal *The Sense In Which Communists Must Be Communitarian: Alasdair MacIntyre's Neo-Aristotelianism and Marx's Case for Freedom and Community Under Communism*

Abstract

Many commentators maintain that Alisdair MacIntyre's Neo-Aristotelianism provides a philosophical basis for reactionary conservative politics. I claim that this is a mistake. In this paper I argue that MacIntyre's Neo-Aristotelianism is relevant for radical Marxist philosophy and politics. MacIntyre supplies Marxian Communists with a means by which we can supplement, and expand upon, Marx's vision for human freedom and community under communism. I

argue that MacIntyre, wittingly or not, provides the sense in which Marxian Communists must be Communitarian.

Dr. Benedict Smith

Traditional Moral Knowledge and Experience of the World

Abstract

MacIntyre shares with John McDowell a broad commitment in moral epistemology to the centrality of tradition, and both regard forms of enculturation as conditions of moral knowledge. However, MacIntyre is critical of the thought that moral reasons are available only to those whose experience of the world is conceptually articulated, and who enjoy free rational activity in the sui generis space of reasons. Nevertheless, MacIntyre is at least sympathetic to a contrast between a subject's ability to achieve a 'critical distance' from the content of experience, and how ownership of a 'world view' is unavailable to creatures which lack relevant conceptual capacities. The nature of this critical distance requires clarification and my paper examines its status in a contextualist understanding of moral knowledge, and its role in an account of imagination and progress.

Steve Thomas

Rationality, traditions and conceptual schemes in the work of Alasdair

MacIntyre

Abstract

The notion of traditions as rival and incommensurable conceptual schemes is central to MacIntyre's work on rationality in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*. The starting point for this paper is the problems that such an account of practical rationality have raised for understanding the situation of the great many inhabitants of the modern world who cannot meaningfully be said to belong to a single coherent epistemic or linguistic moral community. My aim will be to compare the position that he develops in these influential work of the 1980s with his treatment of rationality in two key papers of the 1960s, 'A mistake about causality in social science' and 'The idea of a social science'. Although

there is much in these works that will contribute to MacIntyre's later position. I also want to argue that they raise issues that could be addressed outside of the constraint of his later account of the nature of a conceptual scheme. I will suggest that this possibility needs to be pursued if we are to make use of much of what is valuable about MacIntyre's critique of the moral situation of modernity whilst also adequately coming to terms with a situation in which schemes of thought, and consciousness in general, are inevitably more mixed and contradictory than MacIntyre's later work can reconcile with the conditions for rationality.

Dr. Wendy Wheeler

The Human Telos and C.S. Peirce's "play of musement"

Abstract

How can we describe rational practices informing a telos of human flourishing in terms of institutional practices as MacIntyre demands? Clearly, institutions in modernity are governed by instrumental rationality focussed on means, and this entails that the individuals-in-relationship which make up institutions (and which, in turn, form the web of institutional relations which comprise societies) will be widely thwarted in creative discovery of, and autopoietic participation in, the telos of their own lives. The latter is thus consigned to a kind of half-life in care of the self and others, 'leisure' pursuits, hobbies and so on. In order to understand the forms of institutional practice which would be capable of supporting individual and general, properly intersubjective, flourishing, I want to pursue, in this paper, the question of teleological becoming as it is experienced in an individual's life: phronesis as self-knowledge born in communication with the other. Unsurprisingly, this will turn out to have all the features of genuine creativity (as opposed to instrumental innovation) which are found in standard research on creativity. The latter emerges in individuals, but it is an intersubjective affair through and through; it depends upon relationship and communication in a community with a more or less shared, non-coerced, vision of how the world is. The scientific community is a case in point.

In this paper, it is the communicational aspect of creative experience which I want to dwell upon. The rationality in nature which makes science possible is, as Charles Sanders Peirce knew from his reading of scholastic philosophy, essentially semiotic: 'the universe', Peirce said, 'is perfused with signs'. All life, from the cell all the way up to us, is communicational and semiotic: life means semiosis. It was this Peircean insight which was developed by Thomas A. Sebeok, and later others, into the new interdiscipline of biosemiotics. But Peirce was first and foremost a logician; for him this semiotic activity, the reading of signs, perfused all logical operations productive of new knowledge of any kind. And for Peirce, these operations consisted not only of deduction and induction, but, most importantly, because first in the series, of the kind of logic he termed abduction (or retrodution). Abduction is the most mysterious kind of sign-reading (and the most creative, of course) because it is hard to explain where the signs come from which suddenly seize the individual in the form of an hypothesis of some sort - the beginning of a possible answer to the question he or she is immersed in, and which will go on to be tested via deduction and then induction - whether by scientists or, more informally, by plain persons. Peirce's clearest, though rather indirect, account of abduction is given in his idea of 'the play of musement'. Not, in fact, very surprisingly, this occurs in a 1908 article in the *Hibbert Journal* (vol 7, pp90-112) called 'A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God'. The mystery of musement can take you that way.

In this paper, I shall discuss 'the play of musement', noting its derivation from Schiller's *spieltrieb*, its closeness to Gadamer's idea of 'play' and to Michael Polanyi's idea of the structure of tacit knowledge. I shall suggest that abduction depends on signs which are memories, many of which have, of necessity, fallen below the level of consciousness. These memories (conscious and unconscious) are drawn, of course, from the intersubjective human store ('the word-hoard'), but they are dead in books, paintings, songs, buildings and so on, and are only kept alive in individual minds where they can and do become sources of progressive hermeneutical activity. This, I shall say, is the importance of the life of traditions, and of the necessity of our fidelity to their liveliness in us. This is the living aspect of a past which is all

our resource in making the future. Being seized by the play of musement, and having faith in its reality as a real source of future knowledge when we let it lead us on is a central practice of ' goods of excellence' , and is what is involved in phronesis as the living out of the human telos in which the wide river of the past flows through each one of us and back into the common flood. The implications of this for a collective life entirely given over to the instrumental uses of reason, and to ' goods of effectiveness' alone, should be obvious: ' near total effacement' of the virtues and, concomitantly, of truly creative life itself.