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MacIntyre and Habermas: A Proposed "Traditions of Enquiry"-Theoretic Turn Within Sociological Theory

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Sociological Theory

by

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Abstract

This thesis brings together the works of Jürgen Habermas and Alasdair MacIntyre in an attempt to overcome what I have identified as problems in the normative sociological project of the former. Critiques levied against the is-ought problem implicit in the normative aspects of Habermas' theory of communicative action, and the role that the concept of *lifeworld* plays in Habermas' overall theory, are overcome through a dialogue with the works of MacIntyre. In proposing MacIntyre's idea of 'traditions of inquiry' as a sociologically valuable tool of investigation and understanding, the author also seeks to access some of the normatively driving ideas about human goods, communities, and flourishing from MacIntyre and bring them into dialogue with Habermas' normative project. To do this however, certain disagreements, especially about modernity, must be either overcome or shown to be not significant enough to questions at hand. In facilitating this dialogue between Habermas and MacIntyre, the MacIntyrean concept of 'translatability' is employed to judge the similarities and differences between the two theorists' ideas, and judge how debilitating the differences that exist are. All this is aimed at reconceptualizing sociology as a normative exercise, not merely restricted to the description of the social world, but fruitfully engaging with questions of 'what ought we to do.'

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Reiss Kruger.

Acknowledgement

Dedication

I would like to dedicate the completion of this work to my late father, Raymond ('Jack') John Kruger, who isn't here to see its completion. With every stride further I take, I know he would be proud, and when nothing else does, that keeps me going.

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1. Introduction

What ought we to do? Philosophers have pondered the answer to this question for millennia. This question is at the heart of many an inquiry in many a discipline, directly or indirectly. Despite this, there is a strong assumption within certain disciplines and among certain methodologies within said disciplines that asking – let along trying to answer - normative questions is taboo (which is itself a normative claim). Sociology is often one such discipline.

Against resistance, though, there are those within the history (including the living history) of sociology which seek to not only to describe and catalogue, but to also move beyond that to answering questions of 'what ought we to do.' Jürgen Habermas is one such theorist. His normative sociological work spans more than half a century and a wide range of topics.[1] Despite his contributions, his influence within contemporary sociology has declined. This decline is possibly because there are problems within the work of Habermas which prevent him from actually answering the questions which he asks, and pushing towards a truly justified normative sociology.[2]

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[1] Just some of his works include: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* ([1962], 1991 in English), *Theory and Practice* (1973 in English), *On the Logic of the Social Sciences* ([1967], 1988 in English), *Toward a Rational Society* ([1968/1969], 1971 in English), *Technology and Science as Ideology* ([1968], 1991 in English), *Knowledge and Human Interests* ([1968], 1971, in English), *Legitimation Crisis* ([1973], 1992 in English), *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction* ([1984], 2001 in English), *The Theory of Communicative Action* ([1981], 1984/1987, in English), *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* ([1983], 1995 in English), *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity* ([1985], 1987, in English), *The New Conservatism* ([1985/1987], 1994 in English), "The New Obscurity: The Crisis of the Welfare State" (1986), *Postmetaphysical Thinking* ([1988], 1992 in English), *Justification and Application* ([1991], 2001 in English), *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* ([1992], 1996 in English), *On the Pragmatics of Communication* ([1992], 1998 in English), *The Inclusion of the Other* ([1996], 1998 in English), *The Postnational Constellation* (1998), *Religion and Rationality* ([1981], 1998 in English), *Truth and Justification* ([1999], 2003 in English), *The Future of Human Nature* ([2001], 2003 in English), *The Divided West* (2006), *The Dialectics of Secularization* ([2005], 2006 in English), *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays* ([2005], 2008 in English), *Europe: The Faltering Project* (2009), "The Crisis of the European Union" (2012), among his many other articles and interviews.
[2] The specifics of the problems which I will identify will be elaborated on later.

While I will be identifying problems with Habermas' normative sociological project, they are not, I will argue, fatal problems. They are very much problems which can be overcome, and this can be done with the aid of certain conceptual and normative tools which will be provided in large part by the work of Alasdair MacIntyre.

MacIntyre's body and range of work is – like Habermas' – massive.[3] I will be focusing largely on his work on *traditions of inquiry,[4]* which will allow me to situate Habermas in such a way as to have them become partners in a dialogue, rather than mutually skeptical – or worse, untranslatable – individuals. While bringing them together, I will not (and MacIntyre's theories will not allow me to) lose sight of the historicity which contextualized the works of all the theorists involved.

What is proposed then is a progressive dialogue[5] between Habermas and MacIntyre, in part facilitated by MacIntyre, towards the end of resolving some of the problems which will be identified within the works of Habermas, and thus, a more cogent normative sociology. This dialogue will not be without its challenges however. Differences in time, language, subject matter, and political and idealistic impressions and opinions will certainly complicate matters.

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[3] His work includes (but is not limited to): *Marxism: An Interpretation* (1953), *The Unconscious: A Conceptual Analysis* (1958), *Difficulties in Christian Belief* (1959), *Hume's Ethical Writings* (1965), *A Short History of Ethics* (1966), *The Religious Significance of Atheism* (1969), *Herbert Marcuse: An Exposition and a Polemic* (1970), *Marcuse* (1970), *Sociological Theory and Philosophical Analysis* (1970), *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (1971), *After Virtue* (1981), *Kierkegaard After MacIntyre: Essays on Freedom, Narrative, and Virtue (2001), Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988), *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (1990), *First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues* (1990), *Marxism and Christianity* (1984), *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (1999), *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Volume 1* (2006), *Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Volume 2* (2006), *God, Philosophy, and Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophic Tradition* (2009), *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (2016).

[4] While MacIntyre uses the British English 'enquiry,' being born and raised in Scotland, I will be using the Canadian English 'inquiry' throughout as there are no substantive differences in meaning.

[5] When I say "progressive dialogue" I mean to incorporate the historical consideration inherent in the works of Habermas and MacIntyre (*especially* in the latter) with their interpretation of dialogue.

This dialogue will be possible by way of the 'translation' of the theories of one into the 'language' of the other. To facilitate this, I will be drawing upon a MacIntyrean concept: '*translatability*.' This idea comes out in MacIntyre's metaphor of traditions of inquiry representing both literally and metaphorically a 'language,' and the interaction between different such traditions being possible and intelligible only insofar as there is the possibility of 'translation' between this and that 'language.' This 'translatability' is possible in large part due to MacIntyre's focus on theoretic frameworks which make dialogue possible. MacIntyre notes the importance of understanding our intellectual rivals better by understanding ourselves through their theoretical framework(s), which makes dialogue easier, as the common ground necessary for it becomes easier to find.[6] He also notes the importance of recognizing language barriers in the form of untranslatability of ideas/concepts/terms, but also how innovation plays an important role in translation, and how just because there is no parallel concept in x tradition as in y, doesn't mean there isn't an importantly similar enough concept which could be used as a starting point for further dialogue.[7] Lastly, MacIntyre conceptualizes the idea of 'learning the language of a tradition' as most fully achieved not as a second language, but as a 'second first language,' in the manner that people raised with two first languages often know them better – and are better able to translate between them – than people who pick up a second language later in life and use it *as* a second language.[8] These are important because they help conceptualize my project here: by translating MacIntyre into Habermas and vice versa, we can note the - temporarily at least – untranslatable aspects, and work towards theoretical innovation which can help our end of dialogue between the two.

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[6] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 2008), 167.
[7] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 372.
[8] Ibid., 374.

To make clear this concept – central to the rest of this thesis – I will use some non-MacIntyrean examples. To borrow the language example from which the term 'translatability' originates, if you were to have two speakers of different languages, say, German and English, there are parallel words which easily, directly translate between languages. Examples of this might be the use in both German and English of the word 'Atom.' The *direct* translatability in this instance is easily explainable due to the cross-pollination between languages; languages that have evolved in close proximity often pick up words and concepts from one another, and languages which have developed out of other languages even more so. In this instance, it is a shared word of a Greek origin. Then there are examples of words which are sometimes used interchangeably, but which do not directly translate into the same thing (but are often used for the same purposes). These might be 'Guten Abend' or 'Guten Tag' and 'hello.' All are used as greetings, but where 'hello' is a catch-all greeting with no additional significance, 'Guten Abend' is a greeting specific to mid-day or afternoon, whereas 'Guten Tag' is a day-wide greeting, meaning 'good day,' which would exclude 'Gut Nacht,' or 'good night.' While it can be argued that in English the phrases 'good day' and 'good night' are used, there are different contexts: for instance, 'good night' is often not a greeting, but a farewell at the end of a day prior to leaving some person or persons. 'Gut Nacht' however serves both the purposes of a greeting *and* a farewell. So in this case, there is a *high* level of translatability, but it is not a simple parallel.

There are some words and phrases however that become more and more untranslatable. Where a single word in one language requires an entire sentence in another and vice versa, sometimes with that sentence not catching the true meaning in the ears of a native speaker. In

German, the word 'Geist' is translated as both 'Spirit' and 'Mind' in English,[9] but the term 'Geisteswissenschaften' is translated as the 'social sciences' or 'human sciences.' Thus we come to types of words and phrases where 'direct' translations are not possible, and where interpretation, or *translation by linguistic innovation,* becomes an important skill for a translator, or a speaker of multiple languages. Another example of this would be the term 'Sitzfleisch,' which literally means 'sit meat' or 'seat meat.' If a translator left it at that, no turn of phrase would ever be intelligible. What it actually means is that someone who possesses a lot of 'seat meat' are able to sit through and weather something incredibly hard or boring. English terms which are parallel but not fully translatable might be 'perseverance,' 'constitution,' or 'endurance.' They are similar, but none fully capture what is intended by 'Sitzfleisch.' Here the level of translatability is *low*, and any translation must be fully indirect to be intelligible.

There is however an even lower level of translatability, where something is *fully untranslatable*. The only solution here would likely be the adoption of the foreign word. A perfect example would be 'sauna,' a Finnish word for, well, a sauna – a concept which didn't exist in English language or culture until introduced by the Finns.

This example of language is one MacIntyre builds on, and expands to encompass the ideas and terms used within different traditions of inquiry: what is considered good or motivating in one tradition might seem trite or unintelligible in another; a central concept which supports one tradition might make no sense to another, precluding, or at least hindering, successful dialogue. On the contrary, certain terms might be similar enough to facilitate successful dialogue between different traditions of inquiry. It is this concept of 'translatability' which I will be

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[9] But has connotations of both in German.

drawing on in my later comparison between Habermas and MacIntyre, to sum up how positively or negatively impacted any dialogue between the two would be, given their intellectual positions.

It must also be clearly stated at the outset that this thesis is not a proposal for an equal synthesis between Habermas and MacIntyre. It should be clear that by conceptualizing the major undertaking of dialogue herein in MacIntyrean terms (i.e., 'translatability'), that I will be developing a more MacIntyrean position, and indeed, confronting Habermas with MacIntyre, rather than simply slapping them together and hoping they stick.

1.1. Habermas

Jürgen Habermas' work, specifically within *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987),[10] but also elsewhere,[11] attempts to not only describe how normative standards are discussed and arrived at, but how one can participate in such a way as to suggest normativity within the description itself. He does this largely through the relation of his work to the idea of modernity. Habermas "has described modernity as an incomplete project,"[12] and pledged his work in the service of trying to help move towards completing it. Modernity – conceived thusly as a 'project' – was, so argued by Habermas, begun during the Enlightenment. The challenge to the modern legacy of the Enlightenment that was the postmodern turn, wherein theorists became "critical of what they saw as Enlightenment-inspired philosophical obsessions with reason, universalism, and totality that suppressed social and cultural differences alongside more spontaneous emotional and cultural expression,"[13] was one taken seriously by Habermas. These

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[10] Released in German in 1981, the first volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action* was translated into English in 1984, with the second volume lagging behind and not being translated until 1987.

[11] Including such works as *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity* (1985) and *Between Facts and Norms* (1992).

[12] William Outhwaite, *Habermas: A Critical Introduction,* Second Edition, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 1.

[13] Craig Calhoun, et al., eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory,* Third Edition (Singapore: Markono Print Media Pte Ltd, 2012), 437.

critics of the Enlightenment project that had developed modernity effectively leveled a challenge where the project had to be "rethought or abandoned."[14] Calhoun, et al. note Habermas' argument that we should "readily concede the failures and limitations of the Enlightenment, yet see the best hope for human emancipation in its correction and completion rather than its repudiation by anti-liberal and conservative thinkers."[15] In so doing, Habermas saw modernity as a salvageable, or incomplete project which should not be abandoned but rather finished.

Habermas rejects *both* postmodernism *and* conservativism for the anti-modernism inherent in each. In the case of postmodernism he opposes the fragmentation, anomie, discontinuity, alienation, unstable identities, loss of meaning, and existential insecurities that come from its nihilist core assumptions. In the case of conservativism, he rejects the dogmatism and superstition which often follow it.[16]

While he acknowledges some of the criticisms from both sides as valuable, they do not warrant the abandonment of the project itself in his view. And for a large portion of his career Habermas has sought to aid in the progress of that project. This puts him in many ways at odds with MacIntyre, who is very much a critic of the Enlightenment, often garnering the label of conservative for this, and his focus on the importance of tradition. Where both of these theorists align in terms of their foci is the concern with normativity (how it is agreed upon, formed, and by what standards normative claims are judged).

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[14] Craig Calhoun, et al., eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 438.
[15] Ibid., 438.
[16] Thomas McCarthy, translator's introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1984), v.

1.1.1. What Dialogue Means to Habermas

Throughout his work, but especially since the publication of *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987)*,* Habermas has focused on discursive practices and how they shape normativity. Specifically, Habermas' formulation of the concept of *lifeworld* plays a large role in what I propose is the meat of his understanding of dialogue. Lifeworld can be (in the briefest sense) understood as a "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns,"[17] which allows for the productive use of language and organization of society on the implicit assumptions of a population. This stock of interpretive patterns is the necessary background of communication for Habermas, and I will argue dialogue more specifically. Habermas focuses on language as an object, but also language as communication, where the communicative action itself was not just important as an observable phenomena, but as a participative one. This is similar to the role of dialogue in many thinkers (including Plato and Aristotle, with especially the latter being a large influence on the works of MacIntyre). His theory of communicative action ties together the *subjective*, the *objective* and perhaps most importantly, the *intersubjective* realms. Habermas claims this language use has *standards internal to it which allow for mutual understanding to occur through language*, not as an end in the teleological sense (whereby language would be merely a means), but through communication through language itself. Communicative action is an end *in itself* for Habermas.

Habermas' end product is an account of the way in which language works as a medium of communicative action which has internal to it standards that can be used to debate criticizable validity claims, express implicit aspects of the lifeworld, reproduce those lifeworld structures,

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[17] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1987), 124.

coordinate action, and reach mutual understanding with other people. Distinguishing between communicative action and linguistically mediated strategic action, Habermas points out that:

> I count as communicative action those linguistically mediated interactions in which all participants pursue illocutionary aims, and only illocutionary aims, with their mediating acts of communication. … I regard as linguistically mediated strategic action those interactions in which at least one of the participants wants with his speech acts to produce perlocutionary effects on his opposite number.[18]

In so noting, Habermas differentiates his idea of communicative action from the manipulative use of language whereby one person attempts to exert their will upon another in some manner. In making this differentiation, Habermas is aligning communicative action with dialogue as understood by Plato, Aristotle, and subsequently MacIntyre insofar as they understood dialogue as mutually directed and not for the purpose of some kind of utilitarian calculative use of language. While Habermas never focuses on dialogue explicitly (using and defining the term), his concept of communicative action is similar enough I argue to the concept of dialogue used by others to serve as a useful bridging mechanism. Most importantly, his focus on language and its idealized use in the form of communicative action shows that Habermas in theory would be open to the attempted translation implicit in a dialogue between himself and MacIntyre.

1.1.2. Outline

In the upcoming chapter on Habermas, I intend to outline the component parts of his theory of communicative action (with the importance of lifeworld and system), as well as incorporate some of his later works, and examine where they place Habermas in relation to ideas of modernity, postmodernity, language, dialogue, and normativity. From here I will be able to compare and hopefully, engage with in a more substantive manner,

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[18] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1984), 295.

the works of MacIntyre over questions of normativity, and sociology's role in doing more than just describing it.

1.2. MacIntyre

With work spanning from the 1950s through to the present day, Alasdair MacIntyre is very much a giant in his own right. While the topics which he has written on are broad, I specifically intend to draw on his work around *traditions of inquiry* and the role that 'tradition,' as MacIntyre conceives it, plays more broadly in understanding knowledge development, and normative and political progress. The concept of 'translatability' which I will be using throughout this thesis derives from MacIntyre's understanding of traditions of inquiry, and one without the other would deprive this thesis of the full set of comparative tools which MacIntyre offers it.

MacIntyre has - especially since the publication of *After Virtue* (1981) - focused on questions about the understanding of ideas of virtue, justice, rationality, human goods, human flourishing, and inquiry (all of which have direct implications in political theory and practice, which places them within the realm of normative concerns). Starting with the seminal work, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (1981), MacIntyre develops a focus on what role tradition plays in the understanding of virtue(s) in different times and places. Continued within *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) MacIntyre focuses on how questions of justice and rationality are asked (and answered) within different traditions, and when and how said traditions overlap – and what has resulted from this. Further, MacIntyre compares different versions of moral enquiry in *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (1990). In so doing, he compares the means and consequences of each version of enquiry listed and argues that it is actually tradition which is the most promising, even

progressive, of the lot. Engaging with our animality in *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (1999)*,* MacIntyre makes the argument that humanity's dependency, as a species, is inherent and integral to our humanity, and that coming to realize that allows us to develop the types of virtues which are prerequisite for adequately asking and answering questions about human goods. This as itself a necessary first step to actually moving towards these goods in a normative sense. In his most recent work, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (2016), MacIntyre works through the importance of recognizing the role narrative plays in our understanding of self. This is because we exist in the context of a series of histories, which are themselves stories others tell and we tell ourselves. He argues that we have a human telos as practical reasoners, and that part of reaching that telos is being able to reason between goods, which allows for the development of virtues which can constrain bad desires, and enable good ones.

1.2.1.   Non-Relativistic Historicity & Similarities to Habermas

While 'progressive tradition' may seem like an oxymoron, all of MacIntyre's work are embedded in an understanding of history which necessitates the existence of a 'then' to allow for the progress towards a 'now.' Indeed, it is only upon an existing tradition that anything can be built (or progress). MacIntyre's historicity is sometimes used to levy the charge of relativism against him (something which Habermas would abhor), but MacIntyre doesn't use historical context as an escape from value, but rather a tableau upon which is spread the 'prereflective background' which informs all shared life between humans:

> [I]n living out one's life, one is oriented to taken-for-granted notions of the goods of that form of life – what we have called the "moral reality" … - that in turn structure one's practical reasoning as a kind of skill, a know-how in making one's way around that life. … we always simply "find" ourselves in a historical

community for whom some things simply "are", at least from our point of view on them, goods.[19]

This prereflective background for MacIntyre serves a similar purpose in describing the world and situating its inhabitants as *lifeworld* does for Habermas. This connection between the two will be discussed below in chapter 4.

1.2.2. What Dialogue Means to MacIntyre

MacIntyre, like Habermas, doesn't actually write treatises about dialogue itself. However, dialogue as an idea plays a large role in his works. In conceptualizing the interaction of traditions of inquiry, MacIntyre describes them as arguments, extended in time, which must be brought into some kind of engagement with one another. [20] An engagement which is best pursued in a dialogical manner, as MacIntyre notes the importance of cooperation in disagreement and argument – claiming that dialogue is a form of cooperative inquiry.[21] With his focus on the consequences of traditions of inquiry that become stuck in their ways and the importance of practical reasoning to human goods, MacIntyre shows that dialogue means to him something very similar to what it meant to Plato.

Like Plato, MacIntyre sees the human life as one composed of reasoning between goods, in an attempt to find the best goods. How is this done? Plato argues that there are several requirements for dialogue: First, there cannot be too many people so as to be unable to engage in dialogue.[22] Second, there is a constant striving to find common ground which shows that unlike

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[19] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192.

[20] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 12.

[21] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 205.

[22] Plato, *Gorgias* in "Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Meno, Gorgias, Menexenus: The Dialogues of Plato, Volume 1" trans. R. E. Allen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 474b.

rhetoric, dialectic is to some extent cooperative.[23] Lastly, three things are required: knowledge,

kind regard, and frankness.[24] Knowledge is required for a discussion to be had at all. At the very

least this must be knowledge of one's own ignorance (knowing what one does not know). Kind

regard is necessary because dialectic is cooperative and aimed towards the mutually good end of

all participants. It is not like the sophistic struggle to 'win' and 'beat your opponents.' Finally,

frankness is required so conversation can begin and continue even when topics are serious. In

this way, frankness and kind regard temper one another: one preventing conversation from

becoming merely a bunch of polite posturing, and the other preventing it from devolving into a

fight, while knowledge is the currency of the discussion.

MacIntyre notes that reasoning between goods is not something which can be done alone,

and that reasoning rightly understood *is* aimed at some good.[25] Knowledge is a component part

of the 'prereflective background' MacIntyre notes as necessary for, and always already existing

in cases of, human language use. Kind regard is important, as "dialogue is therefore a

cooperative form of enquiry, which fails insofar as it becomes too adversarial."[26] Frankness is

also essential for dialogue as MacIntyre sees it: "dialogue requires openness on our part to the

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[23] Plato, *Gorgias,* 481c-d. Despite the 'linguistic turn' often being associated with postmodern relativism, here we see an argument for the intersubjective grounding nature of language which allows for a world not victim to absolute relativism and atomistic interrelations.

[24] Ibid., 487a.

[25] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 25. "Our everyday judgments about the good and the bad, the better and the worse, at least when our evaluative language is in good order, presuppose some perhaps inchoate view of what it is that human flourishing consists in, even though it may be one that we ourselves have never spelled out. Disagreements with others on particular occasions about how it would be best to act may give expression either to disagreements about what human flourishing is in general or to disagreements about what conduces to human flourishing in this particular set of circumstances." In so noting, MacIntyre is both connecting his understanding of human flourishing to a prereflective background similar to Habermas' conception of lifeworld. He is also implicitly noting the importance of *others* in our reasoning: it is only through *others* that these prereflective conditions are explicitly engaged with, rationally. And said engagement is engagement over questions of human flourishing, which necessitates the goods of flourishing – questions of human goods.

[26] Ibid., 205.

widest range of relevant objects that can be advanced by [our partner in dialogue] against whatever case it is that we are making."[27]

While he is well aware that inanimate, abstract things such as 'traditions of inquiry' themselves cannot actually engage in physical dialogue, MacIntyre expands the Platonic understanding of dialogue to include a focus on the importance of the particular history of the particular subjects who *do* engage in tangible dialogue. In so doing, MacIntyre is making space within his understanding of dialogue for the importance and role of his work on tradition, as well as allowing for the noting of other, abstract impacts on dialogue, such as ideas of human goods, human flourishing, human virtues, etc.

1.2.3. Outline

It is largely through the above noted works which focus on and develop his ideas around traditions thus described that I will bring Habermas and MacIntyre into dialogue with one another, despite the conceptual differences between the two. MacIntyre will also be important to this thesis by developing a defence of tradition that is not reactionary and not hindered by some of the complications of communitarianism and some collectivist theory. To do this, I will outline MacIntyre's rejection of postmodernity and conservativism; his understandings of modernity its consequences; his understanding of traditions of inquiry; and the normative tools that he brings to the dialogue with Habermas.

1.3. Moving Forward

Each of the theorists which will be involved in this process have as a central focus the idea of *dialogue* in some form or another. MacIntyre stresses the importance (indeed, necessity) of dialogue between and within traditions, thus allowing for his engagement with Habermas, in

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[27] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 205.

his different social and intellectual context. Habermas' concern with the linguistic element of human intersubjectivity and the access to the lifeworld, and how normativity can be derived through human interactions is a concern with dialogue in all ways but name. It is this shared concern that will allow the possibly incompatible aspects of each theorist to at least be discussed, rather than merely be views in abject confusion.

If a prereflective background or lifeworld is required for mutual intelligibility, then it will be represented by the history of normative and linguistic theory through both of these theorists. In providing the means for bringing Habermas and MacIntyre together, this background – this necessary part of dialogue – will facilitate the bringing of what MacIntyre has to offer to the normative sociological project of Jürgen Habermas.

2. Habermas

2.1. Contextualization & Role

Jürgen Habermas is "arguably the most important social thinker in the world today."[28] With a career in social theory spanning over half a century, he is still actively engaged with theory to this day.[29] Grounded in the interdisciplinary Marxist thought which inspired the Frankfurt School, he is largely influenced by Karl Marx, as well as by Max Weber, Georg Simmel, and György Lukács.[30] His historical significance can be spoken to by his vast work, but his contemporary significance stems in part from the "linguistic turn" in sociology and philosophy, especially when analyzing mass media, and its role on the development of critical theory, especially in "the way that the field of cultural representations [were] shaped by prevailing relations of power."[31] This linguistic, semiotic turn led in part to the postmodern movement, which was embodied by thinkers "critical of what they saw as Enlightenment-inspired philosophical obsessions with reason, universalism, and totality that suppressed social and cultural differences alongside more spontaneous emotional and cultural expression."[32] Supported by (although not initiated by) the likes of Jean-François Lyotard and Michel Foucault, postmodernists suggested that "in a contemporary world that was increasingly socially and culturally fragmented and in which the manifest irrationality of unchecked scientific reason was plainly evident, modernity's "metanarratives" – the shared stories through which claims to truth

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[28] George Ritzer, *Modern Sociological Theory,* Seventh Edition (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2008), 438; see also William Outhwaite, *Habermas*, 4.

[29] Ibid., 1-4.

[30] William Outhwaite, "Jürgen Habermas." In *Key Sociological Thinkers,* Second Edition, ed. Rob Stones (New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 251.

[31] Craig Calhoun, et al., eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 437.

[32] Ibid., 437.

are made and modern institutions are legitimated – were being exhausted."[33] The other major

contribution to social theory Habermas is known for is his work on modernity: what is it, how it

is developed, where it is going, and what it ought to be like.

Habermas' role in this thesis is as the starting point for a normative sociological project.

Like Habermas, this thesis seeks to engage with progress towards the possibility of sociology

serving as a producer of normativity, not merely a describer of it. Can sociology answer

questions of what we ought to do? Or is that a role beyond it? This thesis intends to probe the

possibility that the former is indeed the case, and that despite the upcoming critiques, Habermas

is a good place to start to move in that direction. Going forward, I will argue that traditions –

encompassing both rationality and ethics – are essential components to sociological

investigation, especially of the normative variety. As such, I want to review Habermas' project

as I see it, and then lay out my critiques, towards the end of improving it. After laying out my

critiques, MacIntyre will be reviewed so that fruitful dialogue can be carried out in the discussion

chapter when I bring Habermas and MacIntyre together, and show how MacIntyre could offer

tools to help Habermas in his project, but how Habermas – as he stands – may not be willing to

engage with them and how that is a weakness.

Despite the critiques I will levy, Habermas' integrative historical work – connecting the

theorists of the past to present problems with the aim of drawing what is useful from them

without pigeon-holing himself when faced with valid criticism – will help his work connect with

that of MacIntyre. In this chapter I will discuss what Habermas rejects as a prelude to what he

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[33] Craig Calhoun, et al., eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 437. While Foucault and Lyotard were figureheads of postmodernism and the linguistic focus therein, Habermas' linguistic turn came quite early, and is likely as much (if not more) influenced by Wittgenstein and Austin (especially considering their heavy featuring within the *Theory of Communicative Action*).

proposes. Among the things he rejects are: postmodernity and conservativism, various theories of action, the influence of the philosophy of consciousness, an overreliance on systems theory, and the abandonment of the project of modernity. I will then move on to the core concepts which he proposes – lifeworld, system, communicative action – and the role they play in the normative project he aims at. His influences in various cases will be mentioned throughout.[34] Lastly, I will explicate my critiques of his project thus far.

2.2. Modernity: An Unfinished Project

While much theory since the 1970s has been devoted to analyzing, positing, and critiquing the various impacts of postmodernity, just as much if not more work has gone into the analysis of modernity. Habermas makes the argument that since the late eighteenth century, modernity has been developed (and has continued to develop) as a philosophic theme.[35] While he has criticisms of the development of a modernity based in the philosophy of the subject (via Hegel and others)[36] which are well developed in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987) and elsewhere,[37] his criticisms of Nietzsche[38] and his heirs, Heidegger,[39] Bataille,[40] Foucault,[41] and Derrida[42] are largely developed in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987). His criticisms in *these* regards are important because of the role that Nietzsche and his

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[34] E.g. The role of Husserl in the development of the concept of lifeworld, the role of Parsons in the development of system, etc.

[35] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity,* trans. Frederick G. Lawrence, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), xix, 4.

[36] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 23-44.

[37] Ibid., 294-326.

[38] Ibid., 51-105.

[39] Ibid., 97-99, 131-160.

[40] Ibid., 99-105, 211-237.

[41] Ibid., 238-293.

[42] Ibid., 161-184.

heirs have played in the changing understandings of modernity and the development of the

concept of postmodernity (and will be addressed shortly).

Just what does Habermas think modernity consists of, however? Modernity is a concept

which, as Habermas argues, was first used by Hegel as an epochal concept, referring to the 'new

age,' denoting for him massive changes around the year 1500: the discovery of the 'new world,'

the Renaissance, and the Reformation.[43] This original time-consciousness definition of

modernity characterized the present as "a transition that is consuming in the consciousness of a

speeding up and in the expectation of the differentness of the future."[44] Modernity was a

"historical-philosophical perspective: One's own standpoint was to be brought to reflective

awareness within the horizon of history as a whole."[45] Perhaps most importantly however, is that

modernity can (and will) no longer "borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the

models supplied by another epoch; *it has to create its normativity out of itself*."[46] This is seen in

the changes in art which relativized the standards of beauty, "assimilating the aesthetic concept

of perfection to that of progress as it was suggested by modern natural science."[47] Modernity is

marked – according to Hegel – by "a structure of self-relation that he calls subjectivity."[48] This

subjectivity has influence on all things within modernity:

> In modernity, therefore, religious life, state, and society as well as science, morality, and art are transformed into just so many embodiments of the principle of subjectivity. Its structure is grasped as such in philosophy, namely, as abstract subjectivity in Descartes's "*cogito ergo sum*" and in the form of absolute self-consciousness in Kant. It is the structure of a self-relating, knowing subject,

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[43] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 5.
[44] Ibid., 6.
[45] Ibid., 6.
[46] Ibid., 7, emphasis in original.
[47] Ibid., 8.
[48] Ibid., 16.

which bends back upon itself as object, in order to grasp itself as in a mirror image.[49]

From this we can see Hegel's account of self-consciousness coming through in the subjectivity of modernity.[50] Habermas of course aims in his own work at an ideal form of modernity in seeking to overcome the problems of this subject-centred reasoning which is – by his own account – endemic to the development of the concept of modernity,[51] whether that is possible or not is something which we will see Habermas and MacIntyre disagree on. Modernity is something which has been conceptualized differently in different times and by different persons,[52] but the important themes to keep in mind when discussing it, for the purposes of this thesis, are that it is a period/condition/state of being which is very forward thinking (insofar as it looks to the future at the expense of the past); that it is typified by individualism and relativism which go hand-in-hand; that it has attempted to undo the power of religion through the Enlightenment project of reason,[53] and in having demolished the former's spiritual power has in some cases mystified rationality into some chimeric entity in an attempt to handle the alienating and isolating social fallout.

Habermas wants to suggest that modernity is not something which has been (or even can be) overcome in the way that the existence of postmodern thought might suggest, and to do this he undermines the underlying premises which support claims to postmodernity. Friedrich Nietzsche was a thinker who in many ways provided a bedrock for future postmodern claims, and is someone both Habermas and MacIntyre consider important enough to address at length in

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[49] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 18, emphasis in original.
[50] Whether that account influenced Hegel's understanding of modernity, or vice versa is neither here nor there.
[51] Ibid., 20.
[52] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 87. Nietzsche for example conceived it as merely another epoch, rather than some sort of historical pinnacle. Ironically similar to MacIntyre's observation that modernity is not automatically better simply because it is newer, given MacIntyre's critiques of Nietzsche.
[53] Ibid., 84, 86.

their rejections of these claims. For Nietzsche, the power of reason, almost deified during the Enlightenment, could not replicate the unifying power of traditional religion which it had overthrown.[54] This is why Nietzsche attempts throughout his work to overcome reason, as overcoming reason for Nietzsche would be simultaneously an overcoming of the nihilistic impact of reason as he saw it. He tries to "gain a foothold in myth as the other of reason,"[55] opposing the two to each other. It is interesting to note that the concept of the Übermensch, often mistranslated as "super-man," is better interpreted as "over-man," or one who overcomes,[56] and it is the self to which Nietzsche is referring when striving for overcoming. The overcoming of the modern self (or the philosophy of self as conceptualized within modernity) is this ideal Nietzsche is positing, through the overcoming of reason. This also relates to Nietzsche's mythical-religious references throughout his works: the focus on the god "*who is coming,*"[57] the Child, in all of its newness and yet-to-be-ness,[58] the focuses on Dionysus and Christ,[59] and the idea that the nihilism of modernity is the signal of the coming god, or the overcoming of modernity itself.[60] Nietzsche seeks the upsetting of "categories of intelligent doing and thinking ... the norms of daily life ... the illusions of habitual normality."[61] Only once all of these have been undone does the "world of the unforeseen and the absolutely astonishing open up."[62]

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[54] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 86.

[55] Ibid., 86.

[56] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, (Kingsport, Tennassee: Kingsport Press, 1985), 115, editors note.

[57] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 87, emphasis in original.

[58] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy of Morals,* trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., 1989), 12, editor's note. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. And trans. Walter Kaufmann, (Kingsport, Tennassee: Kingsport Press), 139.

[59] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 91-92.

[60] Ibid., 95-96.

[61] Ibid., 93.

[62] Ibid., 93.

The yearning for what is to come, and the overcoming which is required to get there typify much of Nietzsche's work. Even his concept of the will to power relates to this, as the "power to create meaning constitutes the authentic core of the *will to power*."[63] Within the nihilism of reason separated from myth – which is the state of being in modernity according to Nietzsche – there is no power to create, to renew. Modern reason – which is instrumental reason – can only analyze. Habermas notes that Adorno and Horkheimer argue along these lines in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972) when they claim that reason itself destroys the humanity it first made possible. They argue that:

> [*F*]*rom the very start* [of] the process of enlightenment [the] drive to self-preservation ... mutilates reason, because it lays claim to it only in the form of a purposive-rational mastery of nature and instinct – precisely as instrumental reason. ... [R]eason has been driven out of *morality and law* because, with the collapse of religious-metaphysical world views, all normative standards have lost their credit before the single remaining authority – science.[64]

This problematization of reason is what lies beneath much of Nietzsche's disgust with reason as it was represented within the context of the modernity he sought to overcome.

So Habermas picks up the problematization of modernity via its rationality from Nietzsche and his intellectual heirs (Foucault, Bataille, Heidegger, and Derrida). Where Nietzsche saw a doomed 'now,' and hoped for a future where that 'now' was completely overcome, Habermas sees the value in the 'now,' an incomplete 'now,' and aims toward a future where the 'now' is completed, rather than overcome. In short: Nietzsche & co. seek the destruction of the broken, while Habermas wants to salvage what he sees as a modernity which has lost its purpose.

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[63] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 95, emphasis in original.
[64] Ibid., 111, emphasis in original.

While Habermas doesn't see modernity as 'broken' per se, he does see it as hindered – stuck, if you will – by certain assumptions and philosophic bases, all of which will have to be overcome if modernity is to be completed rather than discarded. Among these hindrances are the philosophy of consciousness, postmodern and conservative thought, the overreliance on (or dominating nature of) systems theory (which Habermas proposes the inclusion of a theory of lifeworld can balance), and the various theories of action which prevent a move towards one of Habermas' proposals: the theory of communicative action. As Habermas devotes much time throughout many of his works to all of these topics, I will address each in turn to help lay out Habermas' critiques and propositions, before returning to Habermas' normative project as a whole.

2.3. Rejection of the Philosophy of Consciousness

Early on in volume two of the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1987), Habermas notes that the subject-object model of the philosophy of consciousness was historically challenged by the emergence of the analytic philosophy of language, and the psychological theory of behaviour, where both "renounced direct access to the phenomena of consciousness and replaced intuitive self-knowledge, reflection, or introspection with procedures that did not appeal to intuition. They proposed analyses that started from linguistic expressions or observed behaviours and were open to intersubjective testing."[65] George Herbert Mead showed evidence of both of these challenges within his theories (although he never was fully influenced by either): "Mead analyzed phenomena of consciousness from the standpoint of how they are formed within the structures of linguistically or symbolically mediated interaction. In his view, language has constitutive

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[65] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 3.

significance for the sociocultural form of life."[66] Further, Mead "presented his theory under the rubric of "social behaviorism" because he wanted to stress the note of criticism of consciousness. Social interactions form symbolic structures out of sentences and actions, and analyses can deal with them as with something objective."[67]

In the personage of Mead, Habermas finds a basis for the rejection of the philosophy of consciousness within the social sciences. Mead's communication theory was:

> [N]ot restricted to acts of reacting understanding; it deals with communicative *action*. Linguistic symbols … interest him only insofar as they mediate interactions, modes of behavior, and actions of more than one individual. In communicative action, beyond the function of achieving understanding, language plays the role of coordinating the goal-directed activities of different subjects, as well as the role of a medium in the socialization of these very subjects.[68]

Despite this contribution towards Habermas' theory of communicative action, it is important to note that Mead neglected mutual understanding and the internal structures of language.[69] Even with these insufficiencies, the underlying rejection of the philosophy of consciousness is something which Habermas continues to hold to.

Habermas points out that Durkheim's ideas of collective consciousness and focus on sacredness are flawed because of Durkheim's "unbroken ties to the tradition of the philosophy of consciousness."[70] The problems with collective consciousness are, for Habermas, part of the problems of personalizing society, but Durkheim's focus on viewing things in a sacred manner is the crux: "the proposed explanation is circular. The moral is traced back to the sacred, and the sacred to collective representation of an entity that is itself supposed to consist of a system of

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[66] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 4.
[67] Ibid., 4.
[68] Ibid., 4-5, emphasis in original.
[69] Ibid., 5.
[70] Ibid., 50.

binding norms."[71] In this way, Durkheim creates an unfalsifiable circular hypothesis wherein

society becomes both the cause and the effect of its own ills.

Throughout the two volumes of the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987)*,*

Habermas makes it clear that he wants to found his theory of communicative action on the

internal structures, the 'nature,' *of* communicative action, and not on a foundation of a

philosophy of consciousness. This is important, as without an account of the intersubjectivity of

people based in their consciousnesses, it is hard to claim that you can draw normative principles

from the internal structures of their otherwise seemingly contingent linguistic interrelations (i.e.,

through communicative action). This is especially present in the normatively binding power in

the philosophy of Hegel, which largely bases itself on the philosophy of consciousness via the

phenomenology of the subject which is developed in the early and middle parts of the

Phenomenology of Spirit ([1807]/1977)*.* Despite this rejection of Hegel's grounding in the

philosophy of consciousness, Habermas is influenced by Hegel when it comes to development of

the theory of communicative action which he puts forth:

> Against the authoritarian embodiments of a subject-centred reason, Hegel
> summons the unifying power of an intersubjectivity that appears under the titles
> of "love" and "life." The place of the reflective relationship between subject and
> object is taken by a (in the broadest sense) communicative mediation of subjects.
> The living spirit is the medium that founds a communality of the sort that one
> subject can know itself to be one with another subject while still remaining itself.
> The isolation of subjects then sets in motion the dynamism of a disrupted
> communication whose inherent telos is the reestablishment of the ethical
> relationship.[72]

Here can be seen the intersubjective and communicative foci of Hegel, which are also thematic

of Habermas' later theory of communicative action.

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[71] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 50.
[72] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 30.

Several of the thinkers which attempt to overcome the problems of modernity outlined in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987) are also caught in the philosophy of the subject, and this is one reason for Habermas' critique of them. Heidegger, Derrida, Bataille, and Foucault are all in their own ways beholden to the philosophy of the subject. Heidegger:

> [I]n his *first* step de-structs the philosophy of the subject in favor of a frame of reference that first makes possible the subject-object relationships, in his *second* step he falls back into the conceptual constraints of the philosophy of the subject, as he endeavors to make the world intelligible on its own terms as a process of world-occurrence. For the solipsistically posited Dasein once again occupies the place of transcendental subjectivity.[73]

Heidegger's escape from the philosophy of the subject is thus only a façade, and he is still basing his work on the assumptions integral to the philosophy of the subject.

While Derrida attempts to break out of the philosophy of the subject via a critique of Husserl,[74] Derrida "does not take as his point of departure ... that point where the paradigm of linguistic philosophy separates from that of philosophy of consciousness and renders the identity of meaning dependent upon the intersubjective practice of employing rules of meaning," and so thus continues to be stuck within the philosophy of subject.[75] By not moving towards an understanding of meaning based in the intersubjectivity *of* that meaning, Derrida is, like Heidegger, defaulting back to the individualizing focus of the philosophy of the subject.

While Foucault was aware of some of the problems inherent in social theory based in the philosophy of the subject - in part why he pursued a genealogical approach to his work[76] - his approach:

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[73] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 150, emphasis in original.
[74] Ibid., 167.
[75] Ibid., 171-72.
[76] Ibid., 249-54.

> [C]annot lead to a way out of the philosophy of the subject, because the concept of power that is supposed to provide a common denominator for the contrary semantic components has been taken from the repertoire of the philosophy of the subject itself. ... Foucault abruptly reverses power's truth-dependency into the power-dependency of truth. ... But no one can escape the ... philosophy of the subject merely by performing operations of reversal upon its basic concepts. Foucault cannot do away with all the aporias he attributes to the philosophy of the subject by means of a concept of power borrowed from the philosophy of the subject itself.[77]

Foucault is thus likewise beholden to the very thing he is attempting to escape by way of his continued use of a concept – power – based in the philosophy of the subject.

All of these critiques are motivated by the desire on Habermas' behalf to prevent the project of modernity from becoming trapped in the incomplete state he describes it as being in currently. The focus on individualism within many modern and postmodern philosophies is something which Habermas seeks to overcome in his rejection of the philosophy of consciousness.

2.4. Rejection of Postmodernity and Conservativism

Habermas' connection to the crisis implicated in the development of postmodern thought is important because of its critique of the Enlightenment. Postmodernism challenged the rational project of the Enlightenment – which Habermas seeks to continue – as something which "had to be rethought or abandoned."[78] Beyond just undermining Enlightenment thought, postmodernism also challenged Western Marxism – another influence on Habermas - "by rejecting the notion of an objective standpoint of knowledge, that reason was embedded in history, and by casting doubt in discourses of social liberation."[79] Instead of rejecting what he came to call the 'unfinished

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[77] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 274.
[78] Craig Calhoun, et al., eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 438.
[79] Ibid., 438.

project' of modernity[80] (based in the Enlightenment) in the same manner as the postmodernists had, Habermas argued that we should "readily concede the failures and limitations of the Enlightenment, yet see the best hope for human emancipation in its correction and completion rather than its repudiation by anti-liberal and conservative thinkers."[81] In so doing, Habermas disagreed with both postmodernists and conservatives.

In rejecting both conservativism and postmodernism, Habermas is rejecting the 'antimodernism' inherent in each. On both sides of the fence, the consequences of postmodernity and conservativism from Habermas' understanding are dangerous and should be resisted. Consequences which include for postmodernism: fragmentation, anomie, discontinuity, alienation, unstable identities, loss of meaning, and existential insecurities that come from its nihilist core assumptions; as well as dogmatism and superstition on the conservative side, important especially insofar as Habermas allows for criticisms of Enlightenment assumptions without the abandonment of the project of modernity.[82] In a similar manner to Habermas' desire to complete the project of Enlightenment rather than reject it wholesale, I will be offering a critique of Habermas – rather than a rejection - because his project is ideally a good one. There are simply areas which could (and should) be improved upon before I would consider Habermas' normative project free of internal flaws. These will be noted in my upcoming critiques of the Habermasian project.

To defend modernity against these postmodern and conservative attacks, Habermas would have to ground normative principles in a manner which was different enough from

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[80] Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity: An Unfinished Project," In *Contemporary Sociological Theory,* Third Edition, ed. Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff and Indermohan Virk (Singapore: Markono Print Media Pte Ltd, 2012), 444-450.
[81] Craig Calhoun, et al., eds., *Contemporary Sociological*, 438.
[82] Thomas McCarthy, translator's introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, v.

Enlightenment assumptions of reason and rationality that they would withstand postmodern critique, but still defend the overall project of the Enlightenment. The way in which Habermas attempts this defence is to provide a new standard with which to judge normativity: communicative action. In arguably his most impactful normative work, *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987), Habermas develops his theory of communicative action, with which he intends to supplant previous ideas of how to ground normativity. Throughout these works, Habermas seeks to:

> (1) … develop a concept of rationality that is no longer tied to, and limited by, the subjectivistic and individualistic premises of modern philosophy and social theory; (2) to construct a two-level concept of society that integrates the lifeworld and system paradigms; and, finally (3) to sketch out, against the background, a critical theory of modernity which analyzes and accounts for its pathologies in a way that suggest a redirection rather than an abandonment of the project of enlightenment.[83]

In the first case, he wants to overcome the often oppositional nature of social theory between the whole and the part of society, while simultaneously grounding his theory in such a way that it overcomes the specific critiques of postmodernists. In the second case, he aims to merge two powerful concepts to help provide explanatory theories of social structures, and how they can interact with individuals in a better manner (so as to achieve his first objective). In the final case, Habermas grounds his overall project in relation to the Enlightenment goals which he wishes to maintain in the modern project that he is trying to salvage from the ravages of postmodernity (a struggle he continued in his later work, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity* [1987]).

In the breadth of the two volumes of the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987), Habermas addresses a history of social thought, raising in turn various approaches including, among others, phenomenological, social psychological, analytical, positivist, functionalist, and

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[83] Thomas McCarthy, translator's introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, vi.

symbolic interactionist. To each in turn he gives their due, noting the advantages they bring and their formative place in the history of social thought, and what they carried forward in terms of influencing what was to follow. In each case as well, however, Habermas notes their weaknesses, the criticisms that he believes they cannot answer. These weaknesses for Habermas seem to stem from a few key assumptions which many of these approaches rely on, which Habermas claims are flawed and undermine their utility in both describing social action and allowing for the creation of normativity.

The requirement which he gives for his own theory of communicative action to meet his own standards is that the theory has the capacity to stand above pre-existing theories addressing similar areas within the social sciences, including theories of *action*, theories of *social order*, and descriptive *diagnoses of the age*. In regards to the theory of action, Habermas wants to move away from the philosophy of consciousness which has grounded many previous theories of action within social theory towards a theory of mutual understanding (based in the internal rationality of language for Habermas). His critiques of the philosophy of consciousness are largely based on the theories of action which draw on it; being based on an internal reflection, they necessarily divorce (or at least dichotomize) the individual from their social context.

Habermas' theory of social order is one which he proposes must combine the ideas of *lifeworld,* an implicit coalesced structure composed of stocks of social knowledge, and *system,* a reproducible structure governed by instrumental rationality. These two theories, often understood as oppositional in many ways, he proposes can co-exist, not in a Hegelian dialectical relationship (where a mutual overcoming might be in order), but with a *modus vivendi* style tension. Neither *lifeworld* nor *system* are negated or restructured for Habermas, they are merely put side-by-side. This theoretical move requires Habermas to illustrate that theories based solely in system and

solely in lifeworld are insufficient, and a combination of the two (without changing either) is

both *necessary* and *possible*. To make intelligible the rest of his project, both lifeworld and

system as Habermas presents them must first be elaborated upon.

2.5. Lifeworld

Essential to Habermas' communicative action theory (as well as much of his work going

forward) are the twin concepts of lifeworld and system. Illustrating his concept of lifeworld is

useful as it helps solidify his position in relation to wide-ranging theories of the impact of society

on its inhabitants. It's easy to say that this or that idea is 'socially constructed,' but it is another

thing entirely to elaborate on the 'how' of said social construction. Lifeworld as a concept helps

get at the impact that the sum of background assumptions have on the molding of individuals.

Lifeworld also presents a tool for comparison and contrast with MacIntyre's assumptions of the

role of societies (or perhaps communities or traditions) on their inhabitants (covered in the

upcoming chapter on MacIntyre).

Probably the most comprehensive description out of the many scattered throughout the

two volumes of the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987) that Habermas gives of the

idea of lifeworld is given at the end of the second volume:

> The mode of preunderstanding or of intuitive knowledge of the lifeworld from
> within which we live together, act and speak with one another, stands in peculiar
> contrast, as we have seen, to the explicit knowledge of something. The horizontal
> knowledge that communicative everyday practice *tacitly* carries with it is
> paradigmatic for the *certainty* with which the lifeworld background is present; yet
> it does not satisfy the criterion of knowledge that stands in internal relation to
> validity claims and can therefore be criticized. That which stands beyond all
> doubt seems as if it could never become problematic; as what is simply
> unproblematic, a lifeworld can at most fall apart. It is only under the pressure of
> approaching problems that relevant components of such background knowledge
> are torn out of their unquestioned familiarity and brought to consciousness as

something in need of being ascertained. It takes an earthquake to make us aware
that we had regarded the ground on which we stand everyday as unshakable.[84]

Habermas here is using lifeworld as a tool to explain and allow for the unconscious (or perhaps

preconscious, or implicit) background knowledge-stock which all people who engage with one

another have some kind of access to. This knowledge-stock is one which is beyond conscious

criticism so long as it is in good working order. It is only when such a knowledge-stock falls

apart that the pieces can become objects of explicit knowledge. Lifeworld, in a way, is the

necessary glue which holds people together long enough, or sufficiently enough for them to be

able to even engage in conscious ways over criticizable validity claims. Or perhaps a different

metaphor might be that lifeworld is the real social lubricant, allowing for the smooth running of a

life where the conscious and individual questioning of every pre-understanding or presumption is

not necessary, so people can engage meaningfully with other issues than 'can we establish that

Ottawa still exists? I'm not sure if I have to pay my taxes this year.'

Lifeworld is essential to Habermas' theory of communicative action for this exact reason:

the engaging in communication regarding criticizable validity claims towards the end of reaching

mutual understanding and coordinating action would be impossible if all possible things were

criticizable, thus precluding the coordination of action through communication (as the criticism

would become self-destructive without an uncriticizable base for it to stand on and take for

granted).

One aim Habermas puts forward for his theory is precisely the quest for mutual

understanding as an end of successful communicative action, and so these concerns are

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[84] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 400, emphasis in original.

important.[85] A further advantage to the incorporation of lifeworld into Habermas' overall theory

is that the communicative-theoretic turn he attaches to it helps to get him away from relying on a

philosophy of consciousness to base his theory on.[86] By rejecting Husserl's basic concepts of the

philosophy of consciousness with which he "dealt with the problem of the lifeworld, we can

think of lifeworld as represented by a culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of

interpretive patterns. Then [the connection of situation to lifeworld] need no longer be explained

in the framework of a phenomenology and psychology of perception."[87] By divorcing lifeworld

from Husserl, Habermas is also divorcing it from the philosophy of consciousness which he

rejects, and ties it closer with the sociology which he is developing based in language and

culture.

While many social theorists have engaged with the need for this unspoken

contextualization of background knowledge, Habermas' idea of lifeworld allows for the

conscious developments in communicative action aimed towards mutual understanding that

foster the evolving and change of a given lifeworld. This allows for *human agency* in relation to

lifeworld, as it is a separate-but-connected part of social life and human interaction, something

which other, more deterministic interrelations don't account for (the relations between habitus

and field for example, despite Bourdieu's claims to the contrary).[88] While lifeworld is necessary

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[85] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis,* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 185-86, emphasis in original. "A theory of communicative action is intended to be a scientific reconstructive theory … one directed toward uncovering the universal conditions that are presupposed in all communicative action." These universal presuppositions are that communicative action is "the type of social interaction that is *oriented toward reaching understanding.* … The goal … is to bring about … the intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another."

[86] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 135.

[87] Ibid., 124.

[88] Pierre Bourdieu and Loic J. D. Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 136-37, emphasis in original. "The notion of habitus accounts for the fact that social agents are neither particles of matter determined by external causes, not little monads guided solely by internal reasons ...

for communicative action as already noted, communicative action is also necessary to keep

lifeworld malleable:

> [T]he reproduction of the lifeworld is nourished by the contributions of communicative action, even as the latter is dependent in turn upon the resources of the lifeworld. But we should not think of this circular process on the model of self-generation, as a production out of its own products, and then associate it with self-realization. Otherwise, we would hypostatize the process of mutual understanding into an event of mediation … the reproduction of the lifeworld is [not] merely routed *through* the medium of action oriented towards reaching understanding, but is saddled *on* the interpretative performances of its agents.[89]

Lifeworld thus does not 'create' communicative action, nor action lifeworld, but much

like Habermas' later integration of systems theory, they are placed side-by-side.

Connected, but not originating.

As Habermas notes, the differentiation between the contents of *particular* lifeworld*s* from

the *universal structures* of *the* lifeworld allows for distinction, particularity, and room for agency

which in turn allows for the conscious forming of normativities through a consensus-reaching

process rather than one of merely obeying existing norms:

> To the degree that the yes/no decisions that sustain the communicative practice of everyday life do not derive from an ascribed normative consensus, but emerge from the cooperative interpretative processes of the participants themselves, *concrete* forms of life and *universal* structures of the lifeworld become separated. … [These forms of life and universal structures] overlap and interlock, but they are not embraced in turn by some supertotality. Multiplicity and diffusion arise in

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Social agents are the *product of history*, of the history of the whole social field and the accumulated experience of a path within the specific subfield. ... For determinism to exert itself unchecked, dispositions must be abandoned [sic] to their free play. This means that agents become something like "subjects" only to the extent that they consciously master the relation they entertain with their dispositions. They can deliberately let them "act" or they can on the contrary inhibit them by virtue of consciousness. Or, following a strategy that seventeenth-century philosophers advised, they can pit one disposition against another: Leibniz argued that one cannot fight passion with reason, as Descartes claimed, but only with "slanted wills" (*volontés obliques*), i.e., with the help of other passions. But this work of management of one's dispositions, of habitus as the unchosen principle of all "choices," is possible only with the support of explicit clarification. Failing and analysis of such subtle determinations that work themselves out through dispositions, on becomes accessory to the unconsciousness of the action of dispositions, which is itself the accomplice of determinism." Said clarification – necessary to allow for agency within his habitus-field construct - is not forthcoming in this or other works of Bourdieu.

[89] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 342, emphasis in original.

the course of an abstraction process through which the *contents* of particular lifeworlds are set off … from the universal *structures* of the lifeworld.[90]

There is a distinction then between *this particular* lifeworld and the *general structure of lifeworld* for Habermas, which allows for specificity in the understanding of lifeworld as a concept which applies in different times and places.

2.6.System

Where lifeworld for Habermas covers the 'ground' (in the sense of it being the unspoken grounds we 'stand on' but which aren't coordinated in any way) to the 'house' of Habermas' theory, system provides the analogic role as the 'structure/roof' to the 'house' of Habermas' theory, in that it is to a certain extent consciously constructed, but the human interaction with it post-construction often forgets this. While those in a house are aware of the ground they stand on, it is the roof they build through conscious coordination. However, post-building, this roof is often as forgotten as the ground. In this way, both lifeworld and system can become part of the background which is no longer actively thought of.

Lifeworld is the always already existing, implicit context within which one finds oneself, a context which is capable of self-replication – and change – also in an implicit fashion; keeping in mind that it is only possible to explicitly engage with sections of a lifeworld when they have begun falling apart. *System* represents the more consciously constructed and consciously motivated systems that make up the objective world: things like governments, corporations, and other bureaucratic structures. They are consciously constructed originally, but can take on a life of their own (rarely does a single person have the power to stop or influence large impersonal systems). Systems however have 'colonized' the communicative realm of the lifeworld

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[90] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 342-43, emphasis in original.

according to Habermas. Where the context of the lifeworld is formed and fleshed out largely by

communicative action, systems often prevent and deny the use of communicative action between

individuals and thus help to promote alienation. This is a negative thing for Habermas because of

the importance of the lifeworld in facilitating mutual understanding through communicative

action, which is posited (indirectly) as the normative end of the theory of communicative action

by Habermas.[91] To understand the impact of system on lifeworld it first helps to understand how

systems theory developed and what it has developed into in Habermas' theory.

Systems theory was largely developed by functionalists like Talcott Parsons. While his

original AGIL systems theory was argued by Habermas to be flawed (insofar as it attempted to

replicate the effect of an understanding of lifeworld through mutually interpenetrating, yet not

consciously constructed, systems),[92] simply incorporating an understanding of lifeworld would

have helped Parsons' overall theory.[93] Habermas notes that Parsons recognized this – to a certain

extent – in the evolution of his work from mainly action-theoretic to systems-theoretic:

> Parsons had to make action complexes *directly* conceivable as systems, without
> becoming aware of the change in attitude through which the concept of an action
> *system* is first generated methodologically by way of *an objectification of the
> lifeworld* ... As a placeholder for the missing concept of the lifeworld, the cultural
> system took on the untenable, ambiguous status of an environment at once
> superordinate to the action system and internal to it, and was, as it were, stripped
> of all empirical properties of a system environment. Parsons rid himself of the

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[91] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 224-26. "Habermas does not really disagree with what Gadamer means by dialogue, conversation, and questioning, but is rather (as Marx did in a different time) constantly drawing our attention to those systemic features of contemporary society that inhibit, distort, or prevent such dialogue from being concretely embodied in our everyday practices. … He is not projecting some ideal that is divorced from our everyday practices but is seeking to remind us of what is always already implicit in our everyday forms of communicative action." Habermas' theory of communicative action is an attempt to show that there is an implicit telos in all *communicative* action, which is mutual understanding, and that there are systemic colonizations of the lifeworld which can get in the way of reaching this end.
[92] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 220-27.
[93] Ibid., 231-32.

difficulties arising from his dualistic view of culturally structured action systems by abruptly ceding basic conceptual primacy to systems theory.[94]

This move to systems theory over action theory was achieved by understanding action systems as "as a special case of living systems, which have to be understood as boundary-maintaining systems and analyzed in systems-theoretical concepts."[95] For Parsons, action systems thus conceived became zones of "interaction and of reciprocal interpenetration among *four subsystems*: culture, society, personality, and organism."[96] Despite his constant attempt to reformulate the role of system in his work throughout his career, it was clear that "behind the system of the basic conditions of human existence, behind the four subsystems of the "human condition," can be found the structures of the lifeworld complementary to communicative action – in a somewhere irritating version, to be sure."[97]

How was Habermas to salvage the idea of system then, and, given his criticisms of Parsons, *why* would he even want to? While supportive of, and reliant on, the concept of lifeworld, Habermas notes the lifeworld itself does not give means to explain its own material reproduction, and that we cannot do the opposite of Parsons: where he construed everything as system, including areas which should be understood as the realm of lifeworld, we would be likewise at fault to construe society *as* lifeworld.[98] This is why Habermas proposes the distinction between social and system integration:

> If we understand the integration of society exclusively as *social integration*, we are opting for a conceptual strategy that, as we have seen, starts from communicative action and construes society as a lifeworld. … The reproduction of society then appears to be the maintenance of the symbolic structures of the lifeworld. … But processes of material reproduction come into view only from

[94] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 234, emphasis in original.
[95] Ibid., 235.
[96] Ibid., 239, emphasis in original.
[97] Ibid., 254.
[98] Ibid., 150.

the perspective of acting subjects who are dealing with situations in a goal-directed manner; what gets filtered out are all the counterintuitive aspects of the nexus of societal reproduction. … If, on the other hand, we understand the integration of society exclusively as *system integration*, we are opting for a conceptual strategy that presents society after the model of a self-regulating system. …we shall have to be content with a provisional concept of society as a system that has to fulfill conditions for the maintenance of sociocultural lifeworlds. … societies are *systematically stabilized* complexes of action of *socially integrated* groups … [and] we [must] view society as an entity that, in the course of social evolution, gets differentiated both as a system and as a lifeworld. Systemic evolution is measured by the increase in a society's steering capacity, whereas the state of development of a symbolically structured lifeworld is indicated by the separation of culture, society, and personality.[99]

It is this *cooperative* distinction which Habermas proposes resolves the problems of a theory based *solely* in either lifeworld or systems theory. Indeed, for Habermas, the fundamental problem in social theory revolves around satisfactorily connecting the ideas of lifeworld and system.[100]

2.7. Theories of Action

What Habermas desires from theories of action is some way to ground human interaction so as to support his claim that *communicative action* can be a rational means of resolving normative questions and coming to normative agreements. During his account of historical approaches to understanding action in human society, Habermas covers and dismisses several theories. These include understandings of action based in the theories of: *teleological*, *normatively regulated*, *dramaturgical*, and *communicative action* in terms of actor-world relations,[101] as well as *analytic action theory*.[102] In response to all of these Habermas puts forward *his* theory of communicative action. To later understand how MacIntyre's work might fit within these theories of action, they will be briefly summarized and Habermas' judgment of them as they relate to his theory of

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[99] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 150-52, emphasis in original.
[100] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 151.
[101] Ibid., 76.
[102] Ibid., 273-74.

communicative action will be noted. These summaries will also serve the purpose of showing how component parts of these different theories of action contribute to (positively or negatively) Habermas' theory of communicative action.

The *teleological concept of action* has held an important place in the philosophic theory of action since the time of Aristotle, claims Habermas. In this understanding of action, an actor "attains an end or brings about the occurrence of a desired state by choosing means that have promise of being successful in the given situation and applying them in a suitable manner. The central concept is that of a *decision* among alternative courses of action, with a view to the realization of an end, guided by maxims, and based on an interpretation of the situation."[103] This concept of action can also be expanded into a *strategic model*, whereby "there can enter into the agent's calculation of success the anticipation of decisions on the part of at least one additional goal-directed actor." This latter model is usually interpreted in a utilitarian manner, and is common in decision-theoretic and game-theoretic approaches within the social sciences.[104]

The concept of *normatively regulated action* does not assess behaviour in isolation from social groups, but rather analyzes the actions of "members of a social group who orient their action to common values." An individual within a social group:

> [C]omplies with (or violates) a norm when in a given situation the conditions are present to which the norm has application. Norms express an agreement that obtains in a social group. All members of a group for whom a given norm has validity may expect of one another that in certain situations they will carry out (or abstain from) the actions commanded (or proscribed). The central concept of *complying with a norm* means fulfilling a generalized expectation of behavior. The latter does not have the cognitive sense of expecting a predicted event, but the normative sense that members are *entitled* to expect a certain behavior.[105]

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[103] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 85, emphasis in original.
[104] Ibid., 85.
[105] Ibid., 85, emphasis in original.

The normative model of action grounds role theory within sociology claims Habermas in his coverage of the normative interrelations between individuals and social groups.

The idea of *dramaturgical action* differs from teleological and normatively regulated action in that it refers neither to a lone actor or an actor as a member of a group, but to "participants in interaction constituting a public for one another, before whom they present themselves."[106] Drawn from the world of symbolic interactionists such as Erving Goffman, dramaturgical action characterizes the actor as evoking a particular image of himself by disclosing – more or less, and purposefully – aspects of his subjectivity. The idea of presentation of self is not merely mindless self-expression, but rather an "expression of one's own experiences with a view to the audience." This model of action is common within phenomenological work in the social sciences.[107]

The concept of *communicative action* refers to "the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations (whether by verbal or extraverbal means). The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement."[108] The core idea within this model of action is interpretation, because of the importance of negotiating definitions within situations towards the end of consensus. Language features heavily within this model of action. This model of action has been foundational for theorists of interpersonal relations such as George Herbert Mead.

In analyzing these initial forms of action theory, Habermas notes that there is an increasing rationality between these action types. Teleological action "presupposes relations

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[106] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 85-86.
[107] Ibid., 86.
[108] Ibid., 86.

between an actor and a world of existing states of affairs. This objective world is defined as the

totality of states of affairs that either obtain or could arise or could be brought about by

purposeful intervention."[109] Through an actor's beliefs and intentions, they can hold:

> [T]wo types of rational relation to the world. I call these relations rational because they are open to objective appraisal depending on the "direction of fit." In one direction the question arises whether the actor has succeeded in bringing his perceptions and beliefs into agreement with what is the case in the world; in the other … whether he succeeds in bringing what is the case in the world into agreement with his desires and intentions.[110]

So teleological action theories are rational in the two ways which an actor can relate to the world.

Ontologically, teleological action presupposes "*one* world, namely the objective world. The same

holds true for the concept of strategic action."[111]

Contrastingly, normatively regulated action presupposes two worlds: "[b]esides the

objective world of existing states of affairs there is the social world to which the actor belongs as

a role-playing subject, as do additional actors who can take up normatively regulated interactions

among themselves."[112] The necessarily social aspect of normative regulation demands the

recognition of a social world within which a norm can be "recognized by those affected, and

[these] intersubjective grounds [are] the *social force or currency* of the norm."[113]

In dramaturgical action, Habermas argues, "the actor, in presenting a view of himself, has

to behave toward his own subjective world. I have defined this as the totality of subjective

experiences to which the actor has, in relation to others, a privileged access."[114] This subjective

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[109] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 87.
[110] Ibid., 87.
[111] Ibid., 87, emphasis in original.
[112] Ibid., 88.
[113] Ibid., 88-89, emphasis in original.
[114] Ibid., 91.

world necessary for dramaturgical action differs from the objective, and social, worlds in important ways:

> A subject capable of expression does not "have" or "possess" desires and feelings in the same sense as an observable object has extension, weight, color, and similar properties. An actor has desires and feelings in the sense that he can at will express these experiences before a public, and indeed in such a way that this public, if it trusts the actor's expressive utterances, attributes to him, as something subjective, the desires and feelings expressed. Desires and feelings have a paradigmatic status in this connection. Of course, cognitions, beliefs, and intentions also belong to the subjective world; but they stand in internal relation to the objective world. Beliefs and intentions come to consciousness *as* subjective only when there is in the objective world no corresponding state of affairs that exists or is brought to exist. … Needs are, as it were, the background of a partiality that determines our subjective attitudes in relation to the external world.[115]

By determining the interconnection between the subjective and objective world necessary within dramaturgical action, Habermas classifies it as presupposing two worlds, one internal and one external.[116]

The idea of communicative action brings into play the additional presupposition of "a *linguistic medium* that reflects the actor's world-relations as such."[117] While Habermas concedes that all of the previously mentioned action theories in some way connect to language (the strategic model of the teleological action theory is often mediated through speech acts, and normative regulation and dramaturgical action presuppose a consensus formation among participants that is linguistic in nature), he argues that the three aforementioned action theories conceive language one-sidedly.[118] The teleological model understands language as one of "several media through which speakers oriented to their own success can influence one

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[115] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 91-92, emphasis in original.
[116] Ibid., 93.
[117] Ibid., 94, emphasis in original.
[118] Ibid., 94.

another,"[119] whereas the normative model presupposes "language as a medium that transmits cultural values and carries a consensus that is merely reproduced with each additional act of understanding."[120] The dramaturgical model understands language as "a medium of self-presentation; the cognitive significance of the propositional components and interpersonal significance of the illocutionary components are thereby played down in favor of the expressive functions of speech acts."[121]

Teleology sees language as one means among many, useful only for the realization of individual ends; normativity as simply a reproductive agent in normative consensus, a consensus which is always already pre-existing; and dramaturgy as an exclusively expressive tool, used for the presentation of self in relation to an audience.[122] Only the communicative model of action, Habermas argues, "presupposes language as a medium of uncurtailed communication whereby speakers and hearers, out of the context of their preinterpreted lifeworld, refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social, and subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of the situation."[123]

Not wanting to reduce the idea of action to speech, or interaction to conversation, Habermas clarifies that he will "use the term "action" only for those symbolic expressions with which the actor takes up a relation to at least one world (but always to the objective world *as well*) – as is the case in the previously examined models."[124] Habermas also importantly wants to differentiate between actions themselves and things which merely aid in action. For example, flipping a light switch is a *basic* action, with the help of which people can achieve the action of

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[119] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 95.
[120] Ibid., 95.
[121] Ibid., 95.
[122] Ibid., 95.
[123] Ibid., 95.
[124] Ibid., 96, emphasis in original.

'turning on the light.' A basic action is any action that cannot be performed by means of an

additional act.[125] Another way to think of a basic action is the most base level action possible,

where more complex actions are composed of a series of actions (such as buying groceries,

which is composed of dressing, going to the store, acquiring goods, and making the transaction),

basic actions are the *actions in themselves* (so dressing; walking/driving to a store; collecting

groceries; paying someone). If someone intends an action, but not the bodily movements which

may help them realize the action, these bodily movements are not considered actions.[126] So

dressing is the intended action, and even the grabbing of socks may be a basic action, but the

component bodily movements which are not intended (the unconscious rolling up of socks onto

one's foot after having done so for one's entire life) is not an action for Habermas.

Actions are, for Habermas, conscious and necessarily the end of some consideration; they

can have means to aid their achievement, and can even be means sometimes, but they cannot

themselves be 'endless:'

> Language [and language use] is a medium of communication that serves
> understandings, whereas actors, in coming to an understanding with one another
> so as to coordinate their actions, pursue their particular aims. In this respect the
> teleological structure is fundamental to *all* concepts of action … communicative
> action designates a type of interaction that is *coordinated through* speech acts
> [but] does *not coincide with* them.[127]

The important thing to take away from Habermas' support for *communicative* action is that it

shows his desire to move away from the monopoly of instrumental reason within some social

science and towards communicative rationality. Importantly, his support for communicative

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[125] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 97.
[126] Ibid., 97.
[127] Ibid., 101, emphasis in original.

rationality is *procedural*, in that it is through the procedure of communication that Habermas

locates rationality.

Lastly, Habermas very briefly notes the role that analytic theories of action may have on

his final theory of communicative action. Analytic action theory is "limited to the atomistic

model of action by an isolated actor and does not consider the mechanisms for coordinating

action through which interpersonal relations come about."[128] Despite this, "[a]nalytic philosophy,

with the theory of meaning at its core, does offer a promising point of departure for a theory of

communicative action that places understanding in language, as the medium for coordinating

action, at the focal point of interest."[129] However, the theory Habermas wishes to develop

requires that:

> [O]nly those analytic theories of meaning are instructive that start from the
> structure of linguistic expressions rather than from the speakers' intentions. And
> the theory will have to keep in view the problem of how the actions of several
> actors are linked to one another by means of the mechanism of reaching
> understanding, that is, how they can be interlaced in social spaces and historical
> times.[130]

Habermas here is developing his idea that it is in the *structure* of communicative action that it

will develop its strength as an explanatory *and* normative theory, rather than in the *intent* of

language users (which would reduce it to a teleological, or utilitarian, means to an end).

2.8. Critiques of the Habermasian Project

Concluding the literature review of sections 2.1-2.7, we can see that Habermas shows how

communicative action is superior as a theory to other action theories by showing how it

addresses all three worlds (the subjective, the objective, and the intersubjective). It also

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[128] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 273-74.
[129] Ibid., 274.
[130] Ibid., 275.

encompasses all of the other functions of the teleological, normative, and dramaturgical action theories as well as allowing for the coordination of action through language use. Habermas claims this communicative form of language use has internal standards which allow for mutual understanding to occur through this communicative action, not as an end in the teleological sense (whereby communicative action would be merely a means), but through the communication itself. Communicative action is for Habermas an end in itself.

In rejecting the philosophy of consciousness, Habermas hopes to avoid both archaic and outdated biologic claims, as well as overly intuitive accounts (which would be, according to him, trapped too much in the lifeworld to offer criticizable validity claims). From lifeworld, Habermas gains the descriptive power to understand the binding and grounding influence of implicit and always already there background knowledge. From system, Habermas gains the descriptive power of how those background knowledges are reproduced materially, and how society structures itself in such a way as to be susceptible to competing validity claims.

Habermas' end product is an account of the way in which language works as a medium of communication which has internal to it standards that can be used to debate criticizable validity claims, reproduce lifeworld structures, coordinate action, and reach mutual understanding with other people. Distinguishing between communicative action and linguistically mediated strategic action, Habermas points out that:

> I count as communicative action those linguistically mediated interactions in which all participants pursue illocutionary aims, and only illocutionary aims, with their mediating acts of communication. … I regard as linguistically mediated strategic action those interactions in which at least one of the participants wants with his speech acts to produce perlocutionary effects on his opposite number.[131]

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[131] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 295.

His purpose in this distinction is to highlight his concern for the intent of the speaker, rather than merely the outcome of their speech. Habermas' goal is to produce a grand theory which does not require metaphysics or overly relativistic, postmodern accounts to derive normativity from. One which could point to the structures of how people engage in communication to derive the normative drive inherent in purposeful human interactions. One which, importantly, could help move towards completing the project of modernity which he sought to salvage. Has this been achieved however?

There are two major critiques of Habermas' work which are important for my incorporation of the works of MacIntyre, one simultaneously internal and external critique and one purely external. The *first critique* is that while the description of *how* people are capable of engaging in communicative action towards the end(s) of developing normativities is thoroughly and satisfactorily discussed, the *why* – indeed the truly *normative* question – cannot be drawn from Habermas' work so far. In this manner, Habermas' normative sociological project appears more as a sociological description of normativity, not a tool for the engagement of sociology in the study *and contribution to the resolution of* normative debates. While it is an effectively elaborated description, it is largely still just a description, trapped within the 'is-ought' dilemma. Habermas' work on communicative action is driven by *mutual understanding* as its rational telos.[132] A telos which brings along with it various requirements with normative implications. The specifics of these normative implications are somewhat fuzzy however.

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[132] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 195, emphasis in original. "[T]here is a *telos* immanent in our communicative action that is oriented to mutual understanding. This is not to be understood as a *telos* that represents the inevitable march of history or the necessary unfolding of a progressive form of social evolution, but rather "a gentle but obstinate, a never silent although seldom redeemed claim to reason," a claim to reason that "although silenced again and again, nevertheless develops a stubbornly transcending power." It is a *telos* that directs us to overcoming systematicaly [sic] distorted communication. It can orient our collective *praxis* in which we seek to approximate the ideal of reciprocal dialogue and discourse, and in which the respect, autonomy, solidarity, and

Richard J. Bernstein has summarized the works of Gadamer, Habermas, Rorty, and Arendt to see a unifying current of "dialogue, conversation, undistorted communication, communal judgment, and the type of rational wooing that can take place when individuals confront each other as equals and participants. … [Which] draws us toward the goal of cultivating the types of dialogical communities in which *phronēsis*, judgment, and practical discourse become concretely embodied in our everyday practices."[133] The overlap Bernstein sees in the works of these theorists in regards to the base requirements necessary to found dialogical communities overlap in part with the ideas of Plato regarding the requirements for dialogue. Dialogue cannot be carried out with too many people,[134] as it prevents the meaningful engagement of the participants.[135] The Socratic quest for common ground in the dialogues shows that dialogue is cooperative rather than combative.[136] And the character virtues required for effective dialogue within the works of Plato are knowledge, frankness, and kind regard.[137] These parallels will show the importance of engagement with traditions of rational inquiry in the style of MacIntyre, as they provide bases for normative claims which might otherwise be impossible to found in some 'rational act of will.'

While Habermas may not be able to answer the 'why' asked of his telos of mutual understanding, an engagement with the traditions of thought which contributed to the underlying

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opportunity required for the discursive redemption of universal normative validity claims are not mere abstract "oughts" but are to be embodied in our social practices and institutions." In his description of Habermas' normative project via the theory of communicative action, Bernstein clearly notes the unspoken telos of mutual understanding therein, and the normative implications that go along with it. These are not very explicitly worked out in Habermas' own work.

[133] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 223, emphasis in original.

[134] Ibid., 212-13. The idea that dialogue cannot be carried out with too many people parallels Arendt's thoughts of politics, as a communicative practice, being 'for the few.'

[135] Plato, *Gorgias*, 474b.

[136] Ibid., 481c-d.

[137] Ibid., 487a.

components that make up that telos and its requirements could potentially give an explanation as to why this end is better than another. Indeed, in the exchanging of reasons as to which end is better than which regarding some normative question on a larger scale, an engagement with traditions of thought could be understood as being a massive abstracted dialogue, extended through time, similar in its goals and in the manner it is undertaken to the very communicative action Habermas describes. The importance of an engagement with traditions of thought – specifically regarding ethical and normative questions – *is* important because Habermas' thesis about communicative reason "only conceptualizes a *procedural rationality;* it is not sufficient to judge or dictate a substantial form of social life."[138] Despite pursuing a normative sociology, Habermas' own theory falls short of reaching anything beyond this procedural rationality.

The *second critique* of his work relates to more problems of wide applicability, specifically with regards to his understanding of lifeworld. Habermas notes at length how people in interrelations can communicate - and how these communications depend on the pre-existing stock of unspoken knowledge, accessible to all participants in the form the lifeworld. He does not, however, explicitly note how large or lasting this lifeworld is. This could prevent analyses using his theories from piercing the depths of history or explaining how different generations or – more drastically – different cultures, can engage in communication in the style of his theory of communicative action.

What is the extent of the lifeworld? Does it have limits? Habermas delineates between *the* lifeworld and lifeworld*s,* which shows the potentially for a larger lifeworld which allows for the interaction of more specific lifeworld*s,* allowing for communicative action across times and

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[138] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 191, emphasis in original.

spaces (not merely within a specific spatio-temporal instance).[139] Habermas notes the paradox of validity claims made in relation to/by way of lifeworld, and how they simultaneously transcend any specific context, but also have to be raised "here and now and be de facto recognized if they are going to bear the agreement of interaction participants that is needed for effective cooperation. … [He argues that the] validity claimed for propositions and norms transcends spaces and times, [but that] the claim is always raised *here and now*,"[140] and how this entwines the real and ideal communication communities. Habermas also notes that statements are only possible about the "structures of the lifeworld in general, and not to determinate lifeworlds in their concrete historical configurations."[141] In so doing he is differentiating between a general lifeworld (which is intelligible in theory) and specific lifeworld*s* which are not (given that the speaker inhabits one such lifeworld). Lastly, he points out that "*concrete* forms of life and *universal* structures of the lifeworld become separated … [and that there is an] abstraction process through which the *contents* of particular lifeworlds are set off ever more starkly from the universal *structures* of the lifeworld."[142] By way of these distinctions he effectively delineates between the existence of *particular lifeworlds* and *the general lifeworld*, and notes that because of the prereflective nature of *specific* lifeworlds, statements can only be made about the structures of the *general* lifeworlds.

This tension between Habermas' more abstract and concrete definitions - and differentiations - of lifeworld or lifeworld*s* is never satisfactorily resolved, and in many of his other descriptions of the interrelation between the lifeworld and communicative action (in *The*

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[139] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 299, 322-23, 343.
[140] Ibid., 322-23, emphasis in original.
[141] Ibid., 299.
[142] Ibid., 343, emphasis in original.

Theory of Communicative Action [1984/1987] and elsewhere) it would seem he is referring to small-scale interaction between people existing continuously – or at least over a significant portion of time – within close proximity with repeated exposure to one another.

In the upcoming discussion chapter (chapter 4) I aim to show how these gaps can at least in part be filled with help from the works of Alasdair MacIntyre. First, MacIntyre engages with questions of the human goods, which provide a normative drive to inquiry, which could help overcome the seeming aimlessness of Habermas' normative project. Secondly, MacIntyre's engagement with the history of moral philosophy in the form of 'traditions of rational inquiry' and how different traditions of thought engage with, and influence, one another could help fill the gap represented by Habermas' seeming inability to extend his lifeworld analysis over and between historical and spatial distances. Thirdly, MacIntyre's focus on the 'translatability' of concepts between one tradition and another shows a focus on language which is shared with Habermas in the development of his theory of communicative action. Prior to this discussion chapter however, a review of MacIntyre's work to provide the fuel for the upcoming dialogue is necessary.

3. MacIntyre

3.1. Why MacIntyre?

Alasdair MacIntyre is, like Habermas, a giant. With works spanning from the 1950s until

the present day, with no signs of stopping, he not only has had an immense amount of time to

develop his ideas, he has also written on a wide array of topics. This is both a boon and a

challenge in incorporating him into my work.

The interest in MacIntyre stems from the potential to help fill what have been identified a

critical gaps in the Habermasian project. Gaps which I will argue can be filled with a defence of

traditions of inquiry that is not hindered by some of the problems of collectivism, relativism,

conservativism, and communitarianism, as well as an account of human goods, and the virtues

that make the pursuit of these goods possible. Collectivism, communitarianism, relativism, and

to a much lesser extent, extreme conservativism, are the charges occasionally raised against

projects such as MacIntyre's.[143] These and other charges (especially authoritarianism) are often

raised against *any* project that seeks normative answers (including Habermas', often from

postmodern and positivist positions).[144] The use of MacIntyre in this dialogue with Habermas is

formal rather than substantive: he will provide the set of rules for going about seeking the truth

rather than the truth itself. What MacIntyre offers in the form of his work on traditions of inquiry

- as well as his work on the virtues and human goods - enables some things and precludes others.

The drawing out of the consequences of his thought in dialogue with Habermas will be

explicated in the following discussion chapter. This current chapter however will be a review of

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[143] David A. Hoekema, "Reasons, Traditions and Virtues: Bernstein's Critique of MacIntyre," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal,* vol. 100, no. 4 (2017), 342-43. Charges he rejects as wholeheartedly as his rejection of liberalism, justifiably, as they are antithetical to both his theoretical projects aims and means.

[144] Steven K. White, "Reason and Authority in Habermas: A Critique of the Critics," *The American Political Science Review,* vol. 74, no. 4 (Dec., 1980), 1007; Jean Porter, "Openness and Constraint: Moral Reflection as Tradition-Guided Inquiry in Alasdair MacIntyre's Recent Works," *The Journal of Religion,* vol. 73, no. 4, (Oct., 1993), 515.

MacIntyre's work since the publishing of *After Virtue* (1981), and how it has developed in regards to the various themes of the background context necessary for communication and intellection; the role of historicism and narrative in MacIntyre's work; understandings of modernity and postmodernity; MacIntyre's thoughts on liberalism and genealogy; traditions of inquiry; and the normative ideas of human goods, communities, and flourishing, which provide a large normative drive within MacIntyre's thought.

3.2. 'Prereflective Background'

MacIntyre's work includes the consideration of a 'prereflective' background, developed largely out of the historical contextualization in his work on traditions of rational thought and inquiry. This 'prereflective' background exists as a:

> [S]hared form of life … necessary to orient people; in living out one's life, one is oriented to taken-for-granted notions of the goods of that form of life – what we have called the "moral reality" … - that in turn structure one's practical reasoning as a kind of skill, a know-how in making one's way around that life. … we always simply "find" ourselves in a historical community for whom some things simply "are", at least from our point of view on them, goods.[145]

This (historically contextualized) shared form of life is the solution to the problem of trying to avoid conceptual and practical difficulties in "a conception of reason that has to claim that it starts from nowhere (as it we always had to deliberate on the principles of deliberation, ad infinitum, before we could ever reason)"[146] It also happens to resemble – both in form and function – Habermas' conception of *lifeworld*. Indeed, MacIntyre takes the role of lifeworld, in providing an ever present starting point for all human reasoning, thought, and interaction, and develops it into a more explicitly historical phenomena.

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[145] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 192.
[146] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 193-94.

This is further evidenced in MacIntyre's work from his focus on the presuppositions necessary for practical reason, and the types of conditions that are prerequisite for human flourishing. These included, but are not limited to, the importance of good friends to the end of human flourishing, and the prerequisites which allow for these types of good friendships:

> It is an insufficiently appreciated Aristotelian and Thomistic thought that one of the marks of a fully rational agent is that she or he characteristically and generally has a variety of good friends. To have good friends one must be a good friend and to be a good friend requires that one have not only the qualities of reliability and dependability and the virtue of truthfulness, but also the two virtues of integrity and constancy, integrity, so that one's commitments do not vary from situation to situation, constancy, so that those commitments endure over time.[147]

The importance of school and family in the inculcation of these and other prerequisites, and their impact in further life, is also noted by MacIntyre,[148] as by many sociologists and other social scientists.

Unlike Bourdieu's conception of *habitus,[149]* and Habermas' conception of lifeworld (insofar as it is in good working order), the prereflectivity of various background influences on rational agents is not beyond their ability to grasp in MacIntyre's understanding. However, it is only through engagement with other people that this is possible:

> Which particularities in an agent's situation are relevant to her or his decision making is a matter of which goods are at stake in that particular situation and of their relative importance in that situation. How clearly agents perceive what is at stake and how adequately they judge often depends on how far they are able to take into account not just how that situation appears to them, but also how it appears to those others who are involved in that situation, especially those others with whom they cooperate in the achievement of common goods. And that ability is acquired only through deliberation with perceptive and truthful others, so that one becomes able to transcend what would otherwise be the limitations of one's own particular standpoint … It matters then what common goods one acknowledges and what kinds of friend one has, something that makes it all the

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[147] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 313.
[148] Ibid., 289, and elsewhere.
[149] See footnote 88 in chapter 2 regarding how Bourdieu's concept of habitus risks trapping people in an understanding of understanding informed by context which is itself beyond understanding.

> more important that children should develop those qualities of character without which they cannot hope both to care about relevant common goods and to have good friends of very different kinds.[150]

In so engaging with others, and in the discussion of – and directedness towards – common goods, individual agents develop the (sometimes virtuous) prerequisites required for realizing their situatedness within whatever social and historical context they currently exist. Indeed, MacIntyre argues that a major task of theory is to articulate and develop further what is implicit in or presupposed by practice, and that agents engaged in theoretical reflection need to learn from each other not primarily as fellow students of theory, but as fellow agents engaged in achieving common goods – as agents engaged in practices.[151] In one example given is the life of C.L.R. James, a black Trinidadian born in 1901. In *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* (2016), MacIntyre notes that despite understanding himself in alien terms throughout his life (Trotskyist terms in the 1930s, and individualist terms in the 1940s), James had an underlying continuity to that life which was only knowable to him through the sounding board of both lived experience and *the people with which that experience was lived.*[152] Despite coming from one time and place, he was able to engage with external ways of life and understanding. However, he was also able to remain a continuity, based in his initial experiences, and tied together by virtue of being the one experiencing said experiences. This continuity was only possible, as MacIntyre argues, by virtue of the 'third person,' the 'other' which makes up our social world, and with whom we engage in understanding ourselves *as such.*

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[150] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 312-13.
[151] Ibid., 111.
[152] Ibid., 293.

3.3. MacIntyre's Historicism and the Importance of Narrative

The historicist aspect of MacIntyre's thought is especially important to the role I've

assigned his work within my thesis. This aspect of this work has largely been developed from the

publishing of *After Virtue* (1981) onwards, and has run concurrent to his work on traditions of

rational inquiry.[153] Despite this historicist trend within MacIntyre's work (and his support for

pluralism), he is far from being a relativist. Indeed, Terry Pinkard argues that:

> What distinguishes MacIntyre's views from what looks like the relativism implicit
> in such historicism is his notion of rationality, that only those moral realities that
> can be rationally defended are suitable and livable. He thinks that only in a
> *rationally defensible* moral reality can we actually *be* the kinds of agents who
> flourish in the proper ways, and that, ultimately, irrational modes of social and
> moral reality inflict so many psychological wounds on their members that they
> can only be sustained both by the construction of elaborate ideologies that justify
> the suffering imposed as historically or socially necessary and by sustaining
> practices and institutions that, although inimical to the reigning social practice,
> are necessary for its sustenance (as soothing the wounds that are otherwise
> inflicted or preventing the entire social order from undermining itself by the force
> of its irrationality and unlivability).[154]

MacIntyre thus rejects the rampant relativism and individualism that go part in parcel with

modernist (and eventually post-modernist) historical development.[155]

Another component of his historicism which is important to note is his consideration of

the importance of narrative, not merely for the understanding of what happens to others, but also

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[153] See his works especially from *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (1990).

[154] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 187, emphasis in original. Here also we see similarities between MacIntyre and Habermas in regards to ideology acting against the overcoming of irrational preconditions and allowing for the continued suffering under, say, a capitalist, modernist, or postmodernist world (take your pick).

[155] While it is true that 'individualism' in its classical form largely developed within modernist thought in the last few centuries, some would argue that postmodernism, in moving away from (or shattering altogether) modernist base principles would likewise shatter individualism. My point here is that while modernists built up 'the individual' as a political unit worthy of praise and admiration, postmodernists' destruction of modernist principles leave a scattered, atomized 'group' of individuals who are so not because postmodernists think 'the individual' is particularly praiseworthy or worth propping up, but rather because there is no longer any large groups one can claim membership in within postmodernism to avoid individualization. So the modernist 'individual' *is* because it is a pinnacle, the telos one could argue, of modernist thought. The postmodernist 'individual' *is* as an accidental consequence of postmodernism rather than its conscious telos.

for what happens to us. MacIntyre argues in his most recent book, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (2016)*,* that narrative fills an important role in the understanding of human nature:

> [T]he limits of … imagination set limits to … desires and … practical reasoning. [The young] learn to hope for the best that they can imagine, and they despair when they can imagine no good future. Because this is so, the storytelling resources of each culture are of great political and moral importance. … It is no accident that those philosophers who have thrown most light on the political and moral life, Aristotle, Aquinas, and Marx, have each provided ways of understanding ourselves that require a retelling of the stories of our lives, the replacement of a less by a more adequate narrative. Yet it can happen, and it has happened in the culture of advanced modernity, that the practices of storytelling become such that they no longer provide the resources for individuals struggling to narrate the story of their own lives, and this both because of what happened to storytelling and what has happened to those lives. … What is too often missing is any conception of listening to stories and telling stories as activities of crucial importance to each of us in understanding ourselves and others, any sense of how much we need to learn first to listen and then narrate.[156]

It is a very Goffmanian perspective MacIntyre puts forward in one sense, that people understand themselves and those around them by the stories they tell, and more importantly, by the stories they *can* tell – by way of the narrative vocabularies they have at their disposal through a combination of their life experiences, the friendships they have, and the cultural context within which they exist.

These narratives have an impact on moral and political discourses as MacIntyre notes, and thus have normative value. Especially regarding understandings of rule-following and rule-breaking, and how they relate to the achievement of goods in individual actors' lives, and common goods for communities of actors. The stories we tell ourselves can sometimes lead to self-deception, but the *capacity* for telling stories also has the possibility within it to lead us out of that deception:

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[156] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 236-37.

[S]tories and theses about rule-following and rule-breaking, about achieving and failing to achieve goods, have to be understood together or not at all. There is therefore of course a danger in treating stories as in themselves, without reference to rules of maxims, sources of practical guidance. We may, for example, too easily cast ourselves imaginatively in roles that provide pretexts for indulging desire for objects that we have no good reason to desire. Yet if we are to understand adequately why we do so … we will only be able to do so by both finding application for the relevant theses and discovering the true story to be told about those segments of our lives in which we became storytelling self-deceivers.[157]

This ability to find our way out of our self-deception relies in part on the virtue of truthfulness – both to ourselves and to others – that MacIntyre stresses here and elsewhere.[158]

MacIntyre's understanding of history and his understanding of narrative is in both cases informed by the role each plays in contextualizing people's attempts to ask and answer questions. Specifically, normative, ethical questions. In this way, his understanding of historical and narrative context is important for his understanding of the prereflective background rational agents inhabit (noted earlier). What his focus on history and narrative doesn't entail however is some sort of relativism which puts people from one time and place and series of narrative tools in one box, and people from another time and place, equipped with a different series of narrative tools in another, where neither box shall ever have the ability to engage or interact with the other. He rejects the cultural relativism born of Franz Boas' anthropological work in the 1910s and 1920s, which according to Kroeber and Kluckholn meant that all cultures were distinct, and importantly, could not be compared.[159] This cultural relativism has left a lasting impact in some areas of the social sciences, including sociology and anthropology, as well as political science, and has become a hallmark of the modernity - as defined by MacIntyre – which he also rejects.

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[157] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 236.
[158] Ibid., 312.
[159] Joseph E. Davis, "Culture and Relativism," *Society,* vol. 45, no. 3, (June, 2008), 271.

3.4. Rejection of Modernity and its Component Parts

As already noted in the chapter 2, modernity is a concept which relates to the 'new age.'[160] A forward-focusing consciousness with baited breath, awaiting the differentness of the future.[161] Most importantly however, is that modernity refuses reference to other ages, and aims to develop its own justification and normativity out of itself.[162] This modernity is typified by the self-relation of subjectivity.[163] This subjectivity has influence on all things within modernity, be they science, morality, art, religion, state, or society.[164] Modernity is typified by foci on the individual (*qua* individual), the market, pluralistic and relativistic understandings of human society and reason, as well as a disconnect from previous epochs.

MacIntyre rejects modernity insofar as it is the origin of, and breeding ground for, certain consequences which he sees as detrimental to the project of rationally comparing claims within and between traditions of inquiry towards any end. The consequences of modernity which MacIntyre seeks to reject seem to – while all interconnected –flow into two camps: relativism (exemplified for MacIntyre in the tradition of *genealogy*), and individualism, (exemplified for MacIntyre in the tradition of *liberalism*). MacIntyre rejects *relativism* because of its inability to both resolve inter-traditional conflicts,[165] its inability allow for any kind of rational progression, and its outright falsity.[166]

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[160] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity,* 5.

[161] Ibid., 6.

[162] Ibid., 7, emphasis in original; Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction,* Second Edition, (Cambridge, UK: MPG Books Group, 2013), 40-41.

[163] Ibid., 16.

[164] Ibid., 18, emphasis in original.

[165] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality* 351-352. "[I]f the only available standards of rationality are those made available by and within traditions, then no issue between contending traditions is rationally decidable. To assert or to conclude this rather than that can be rational relative to the standards of some particular tradition, but not rational as such. There can be no rationality as such. … Let us call this the relativist challenge."

[166] J. L. A. Garcia, "Modernit(ist) Moral Philosophy and MacIntyrean Critique," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 105. "Relativism is wrong in that it is false – indeed,

Despite often being associated with relativism because of his historicist stances,[167] MacIntyre has rejected relativism in no uncertain terms:

> Contrary to what he sees as the relativist's hasty and facile assumption, MacIntyre insists that it is not necessary (nor always) the case that everyone is so situated that there is no position whose adoption *by her* at *any* time would be rationally superior to some particular *set* of alternatives. Adapting … the Kuhnian notion of "epistemological crises," MacIntyre suggests that it is possible for (at least) some of us, by wide study and deep reflection, to come to be in such a position, relative to our own and to some other moral tradition(s), that it may be rationally superior/preferable, even by our own criteria of rationality (C1), for us (people in group G1) to accept some tradition (T1) over another tradition (T2) in our social situation (S1) and temporal location (L1). … MacIntyre … uses [this claim] to place the strong relativist in the extreme position of having, implausibly, to deny this possibility in principle. Now the tables are turned, and it is the relativist who appears the dogmatist, claiming to know in advance and *a priori* that no one can be so situated.[168]

MacIntyre elsewhere elaborates on how, if one conceptualizes traditions of thought as 'languages,' one could aim towards not only becoming 'bilingual,' but to actually have two native languages. In so doing, the 'speaker' of the two traditions would be able to rationally compare claims between traditions in a progressive manner.[169] His rejection of relativism is intertwined with his rejection of Nietzschean genealogy, which he claims has an "inconsistent and inadequate account of the self."[170] MacIntyre's rejection of relativism on the grounds of its hindrance (indeed, preclusion) of rational progress, also relates to his teleological thought.[171]

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as MacIntyre has reversed the expected order, it is narrow minded – to assume that there is no hope, in principle, for us to get to a point from which a rational choice among traditions can be made. However, nothing in that means it will be easy, or that most of u are already in a position to make one."

[167] J. L. A. Garcia, "Modernit(ist) Moral Philosophy and MacIntyrean Critique," 98.

[168] Ibid., 104, emphasis in original.

[169] See chapter XIX, "Tradition and Translation," pp. 370-388 in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Specifically pp. 370-375.

[170] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition,* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 205-215.

[171] J. L. A. Garcia, "Modernit(ist) Moral Philosophy and MacIntyrean Critique," 103. "As an alternative to … [the idea that] our moral philosophies and our moral thinking so disengage 'values' from 'facts' that we retain no capacity for objectively grounding our normative judgements, MacIntyre proposed that we evaluate options

MacIntyre's rejection of *individualism* stems from similar critiques of the consequences

of modernity (and postmodernity) which he levies in many of his works. Specifically, "[w]hat

MacIntyre stresses … is the failure of a purely individualist understanding of our agency to make

sense of [our] historical embeddedness."[172] Indeed, in *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999), he

"brings out quite clearly his emphasis on the acknowledgement of mutual dependency as

opposed to the fantasy, perhaps infantile in origin, of complete and utter independence in moral

reasoning. Only through a properly *structured* set of mutual *dependencies* can we even become

independent practical reasoners at all."[173] *Liberalism*, which has itself become a tradition despite

not viewing itself as such,[174] is the spawn of modernity as MacIntyre understands it, which has

resulted in a kind of:

> [R]ootless cosmopolitanism, the condition of those who aspiring to be at home anywhere – except that is, of course, in what they regard as the backward, outmoded, undeveloped cultures of traditions – are therefore in an important way citizens of nowhere is also ideal-typical. It is the fate towards which modernity moves precisely insofar as it successfully modernizes itself and others by emancipating itself from social, cultural, and linguistic particularity and so from tradition.[175]

In short, both rampant relativism and individualism are consequences of modernity's break from

an understanding of traditions of rational thought and humanity's constant embeddedness within

said traditions. So both relativism and individualism (and consequentially, Liberalism) are

rejected in the same stroke by MacIntyre as he rejects the nihilism of modernity.[176]

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teleologically, and thus see value-judgments as factual." He specifically urges a more "sociological, practice-based teleology" in *After Virtue,* and a more "biological teleology" in *Dependent Rational Animals.*

[172] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 196.

[173] Ibid., 196, emphasis in original.

[174] See chapter XVII, "Liberalism Transformed into a Tradition," pp. 326-348 in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988).

[175] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 388.

[176] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 176. Something which was already identified as a potential consequence prior to industrialization by the likes of F. H. Jacobi: "enlightened reason, so Jacobi's claim went,

Modernity is entangled with relativism and individualism and is a problem because of this. Modernity comprises a "culture in which an inability to arrive at agreed rationally justifiable conclusions on the nature of justice and practical rationality coexists with appeals by contending social groups to sets of rival and conflicting convictions unsupported by rational justification."[177] How MacIntyre argues modernity developed this penchant for relativistic mayhem was through the history of the Enlightenment, wherein objective standards were sought which could provide people a reference point by which to judge all things. This, however, did not happen; instead "both the thinkers of the Enlightenment and their successors proved unable to agree as to what precisely those principles were which would be found undeniable to all rational persons …subsequent history has [not] diminished the extent of such disagreement. It has rather enlarged it."[178]

MacIntyre argues that the "legacy of the Enlightenment has been the provision of an ideal of rational justification which it has proved impossible to attain."[179] In so identifying, MacIntyre charts a history which shows the evolution of certain consequences of this unobtainable standard. One consequence is nihilism: if no universal standard is achievable, perhaps the assumptions about logic and reason are false, and are merely acts of power in a pointless universe. Hand-in-hand with this nihilism is relativism: by claiming the Enlightenment project has failed,

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could tear things down, but it could not satisfactorily build anything up to replace it. Indeed, the forces of modernity simply destroyed all that was good and beautiful and replaced it with an alienated, potentially godless moral wasteland." MacIntyre also notes that modernity's conceptions of morality (or 'Morality' as he labels it in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*) are largely dependent on an aimlessness consistent with nihilism – or at least, aimedness not informed by goods rightly understood. Specifically, the incoherent individual aspects of this 'Morality' are such that no single overarching moral basis for the particular combination of parts that make up this 'Morality' exists, thus leaving modernity in a piecemeal moral wasteland of sorts. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 65-78, 115-19.

[177] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 5-6.
[178] Ibid., 6.
[179] Ibid., 6.

MacIntyre also notes that if no universal standard seems to have successfully been achieved - or even appear achievable – perhaps it is because there are no universal standards? Thus relativism takes hold. Both of these understandings provide the bedrock of what he argues eventually developed into liberal individualism, as will be discussed below.

MacIntyre does not, however, reject modernity due to the oft-levied charge of 'nostalgia,'[180] or worse, being some kind of reactionary[181] or even the absurd charge of neo-Fascism.[182] MacIntyre goes so far as to "identify oppression with deprivation of the capacities and opportunities for rational inquiry. … To have a way of life imposed on one by an elite … is

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[180] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 177-78, emphasis in original. "The charge of nostalgia quite naturally has been an underlying theme in much of the criticism of MacIntyre's work, but it is a serious misreading of his key ideas. In MacIntyre's writings one finds an admiration of much of ancient Greece, but one also continuously finds in that same work more or less condemnatory judgments that it was based on slavery and the oppression of women; Aristotle, while praised, is convicted of grievous mistakes, among them his endorsement of the idea of natural slavery; and, for MacIntyre, the inequalities of the medieval world clearly disqualify it from serving as the perfect model of human development. On the other hand, what makes Aristotle, Aquinas, ancient Athens, and the medieval appealing is that they all involved a way of thinking about and living out *nonindividualist* ways of life in which the "individual" was not taken to the be the ultimate, irreducible unit of political and social discourse, … [nor] taken to have rights prior to his relationship to others, and the status of institutions was not solely to provide the "individuals" with the means for efficiently realizing their desires or for "actualizing" their "selves."
[181] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 181. "MacIntyre does not so much call for a return to the past as for a rethinking of what is actually required of a modern conception that could endorse the "progressive" social movements that have led to recognition of minority and women's rights while at the same time dispensing with the underlying conceptions that have seemed to be necessary to justify those rights." MacIntyre's criticisms of modernity have to do with its individualism, not 'progress' per se, and he does not call for some sort of wholesale regression.
[182] Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Partial Response to My Critics,* In Horton and Mendus 1994: 302, cited in Mark C. Murphy, "MacIntyre's Political Philosophy," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 159. "Contemporary communitarians, from whom I have strongly disassociated myself whenever I have had an opportunity to do so, advance their proposals as a contribution to the politics of the nation-state. Where liberals have characteristically insisted that governments within a nation-state should remain neutral between rival conceptions of the human good, contemporary communitarians have urged that such government should give expression to some shared vision of the human good, a vision defining some type of community. Where liberals have characteristically urged that it is in the activities of subordinate voluntary associations, such as those constituted by religious groups, that shared visions of the good should be articulated, communitarians have insisted that the nation itself through the institutions of the nation-state ought to be constituted to some degree as a community. … [F]rom my own point of view communitarians have attacked liberals on one issue on which liberals have been consistently in the right." In explicitly rejecting communitarianism for the precise reasons that anyone worried about neo-Fascist elements therein would, it is hard to take serious any charges of authoritarian abuse stemming from the ideas of MacIntyre. It is especially important however to address the possibility of these concerns, as especially in the current political climate, academia should not give purchase or shelter to any kind of Fascist thought.

to have opportunities to achieve one's good through practical inquiry frustrated by the exercise of pervasive state power, and thus to be oppressed."[183] MacIntyre further rejects modernity – and often brings Neo-Aristotelian and Thomist critiques to bear – because the problem with modernity as he argues is that "the characteristic habits of thought of modernity are such that they make it extremely difficult to think about modernity except *in its own terms*, terms that exclude application for those concepts most needed for radical critique."[184]

MacIntyre's rejection of modernity by way of relying on often premodern tools shows that his theory can be used as a bridge between the ancient and modern in an attempt to compare rational claims in the manner of having 'two first languages.'[185] What is still required is an account of *traditions* to be able to actually have the 'things' to compare rationally in the first place. Prior to this however, an elaboration on the role liberalism (and later, the impact of relativism, experienced in large part through the role genealogy has played within social theory) plays in MacIntyre's rejection of modernity is an important step to understanding both an instance of his theory of traditions of inquiry, as well as a hotbed for his understandings of individualism and their consequences.

3.5. MacIntyre and Liberalism

As briefly noted above, MacIntyre's concern with modernity is entangled with his rejection of liberalism, and the 'liberal project' as he sees it. Initially the "liberal claim was to

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[183] Mark C. Murphy, "MacIntyre's Political Philosophy," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 160.

[184] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 123, emphasis added.

[185] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 374, emphasis added. "[A]t the very least, understanding requires knowing the culture, so far as is possible, as a native inhabitant knows it, and speaking, hearing, writing, and reading the language as a native inhabitant [does]. … one has, so to speak, to become a child all over again and to learn this language – and the corresponding parts of the culture – as *a second first language*. Just as a child does not learn its first language by matching sentences with sentences, since it initially possesses no set of sentences of its own, so an adult who has in this way become a child again does not either."

provide a political, legal, and economic framework in which assent to one and the same set of

rationally justified principles would enable those who espoused widely different and

incompatible conceptions of the good life … to live together peaceably within the same

society."[186] The liberal project then is an attempt to not so much answer questions of *the* good,

but rather to side-step them indefinitely. This has historically given the illusion of not giving

answers to such questions about the good, and being neutral in that regard.

    This is supported by the history of attempted 'tradition-free morality,' which MacIntyre

notes has been "a history of continuously unresolved disputes, so that there emerges no

uncontested and incontestable account of what tradition-independent morality consists in and

consequently no neutral set of criteria by means of which the claims of rival and contending

traditions could be adjudicated."[187] Liberalism is just one such attempt to overcome the

positionality of tradition by providing a space for neutral judgment of the various traditions

which individuals bring to the fore. However, one of the problems MacIntyre identifies with

liberalism is that it is a tradition itself without being aware of the fact:

> [I]t is of the first importance to remember that the project of founding a form of
> social order in which individuals could emancipate themselves from the
> contingency and particularity of tradition by appealing to genuinely universal,
> tradition-independent norms was and is not only, and not principally, a project of
> philosophers. It was and is the project of modern liberal, individualist society, and
> the most cogent reasons that we have for believing that the hope of a tradition-
> independent rational universality is an illusion derived from the history of that
> project. For in the course of that history liberalism, which began as an appeal to
> alleged principles of shared rationality against what was felt to be the tyranny of
> tradition, has itself been transformed into a tradition whose continuities are partly
> defined by the interminability of the debate over such principles. An
> interminability which has from the standpoint of an earlier liberalism a grave

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[186] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 335-36.
[187] Ibid., 334.

defect to be remedied as soon as possible has become, in the eyes of some liberals at least, a kind of virtue.[188]

Despite claiming that it makes no claims about *the* good – but rather that it fosters the multiplicity of goods within a shared society – liberalism *does* make implicit statements about the good. Within liberalism everyone (as an individual) is to be:

> [E]qually free to propose and to live by whatever conception of the good he or she pleases, derived from whatever theory or tradition he or she may adhere to, unless that conception of the good involves reshaping the life of the rest of the community in accordance with it. Any conception of the human good according to which, for example, it is the duty of government to educate members of the community morally, so that they come to live out that conception of the good, may up to a point be held as a private theory by individuals or groups, but any serious attempt to embody it in public life will be proscribed. And this qualification of course entails not only that liberal individualism does indeed have its own broad conception of the good, which it is engaged in imposing politically, legally, socially, and culturally wherever it has the power to do so, but also that in so doing its toleration of rival conceptions of the good in the public arena is severely limited.[189]

Liberalism's proscriptions and allowances are themselves, then, claims about a 'liberal good.' This despite the fact that liberalism explicitly is committed to the idea that there is no overriding or overall good.[190] This is part of what MacIntyre means when claiming that liberalism has become a tradition without realizing it: it is always already making statements about the good which stem from a history which itself is part of, even if it fails to (or refuses to) acknowledge those facts.

Liberalism connects and intertwines with modernity precisely through liberalism's focus on individualizing everything, which precludes engaging in discussions and dialogue of *the*

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[188] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 335.
[189] Ibid., 336.
[190] Ibid., 337.

good, only allowing for questions of *contingent* or *individual* good*s*.[191] MacIntyre connects this

to the manner in which philosophic enquiry works (or fails to work) within liberalism:

> The only *rational* way in which disagreements could be resolved would be by
> means of a philosophic enquiry aimed at deciding which out of the conflicting
> sets of premises, if any, is true. But a liberal order, as we have already seen, is one
> in which each standpoint may make its claims but can do no more within the
> framework of the public order, since no overall theory of the human good is to be
> regarded as justified. Hence at this level of debate it is necessarily barren; rival
> appeals to accounts of the human good or of justice necessarily assume a
> rhetorical form such that it is as assertion and counterassertion, rather than as
> argument and counterargument, that rival standpoints confront one another.
> Nonrational persuasion displaces rational argument. Standpoints are construed to
> be no more than that. The philosophical theorists who has claimed that all
> evaluative and normative judgments *can* be no more than expressions of attitude
> and feeling, that all such judgments are emotive, turn out to have told us the truth
> not about evaluative and normative judgments as such, but about what such
> judgments become in this kind of increasingly emotivist culture.[192]

The individualization within liberalism is thus not only of concern to interpersonal relationships

and the relation to others, but of individuals' relation to any rational means of resolving disputes.

With everything ending at the level of "attitude and feeling," and assertions rather than

arguments, the emotivist trend within liberalism carries the consequence of the liberal inability to

promote – let alone resolve – rational dialogue over questions of import. The same critiques can

be leveled at modernity more generally and the relativism that runs through both it and

liberalism.

Liberalism and modernity are interconnected because liberalism is in many ways the

child of modernity, historically at least. Theoretically it is something which MacIntyre believes

exists in a dialectical relationship with modernity: modernity is often understood through liberal

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[191] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 82, 106-7. This liberal preclusion of the importance of common goods actually undermines the possibility for individual goods. And it does so by failing to understand individuals as tangibly connected to communities. A distinction begun with Hume's theorizing of people as individuals sans communities.

[192] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 342-43, emphasis in original.

language, and liberalism through the language and concepts of modernity. Thus it is important to elaborate on both, as I have done, to get the full picture of MacIntyre's commitment in opposing both. Indeed the two can be brought together into the conception of 'liberal modernity' which MacIntyre characterizes as a view wherein "it is up to each individual to decide how it is best for her or him to live, and there are no standards by which one individual's rank ordering of goods can be shown to be superior to another's, provided that each is adequately well informed and has avoided incoherence."[193] MacIntyre notes however that unspoken in this conception of liberal modernity are assumptions about what might constitute a 'defective' human being.[194]

How this all might impact a sociological theorist (beyond their existing in such a modern liberal society) might not be clear at this point. In answering this question we must look to the role that genealogy has played in sociological and social scientific thought – as well as its impact on common ideas – and how relativism has been transmitted through it to sociological theory.

3.6. Contextualizing MacIntyre's Rejections in Relation to Genealogy: How Does it Relate to Sociology?

Essential to understanding MacIntyre's rejection of *both* relativism *and* individualism is his work on tradition. In his book *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) MacIntyre catalogues a series of histories; histories of traditions of rational inquiry and how they intersect, grow, and are frustrated. Also therein is the development of his critique of liberalism (which is the 'ruling' tradition in modernity).[195] The importance of tradition to both MacIntyre's overall work, is that:

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[193] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 143.
[194] Ibid., 143.
[195] See chapter XVII, "Liberalism Transformed into a Tradition," pp. 326-348 in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

> [T]here is no other way to engage in the formulation, elaboration, rational justification, and criticism of accounts of practical rationality and justice except from within some one particular tradition in conversation, cooperation, and conflict with those who inhabit the same tradition. There is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting, and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or other.[196]

It is precisely because of the requirement of traditions of thought and rational inquiry for any kind of rationality, and specifically the engagement with thinkers and questions both past and present that this entire thesis project is as much an engagement with and confirmation of MacIntyre's work. MacIntyre notes that:

> [A]ll reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional mode of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition … Moreover when a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose.[197]

In so noting MacIntyre has a critique valuable to contemporary normative sociology (and more importantly perhaps, contemporary sociology as a whole): what are the goods which it should be pursuing? From a more descriptive stance, it is also important to consider what the content of any ongoing internal discourse around questions of the good might be within sociology. If one considers sociology to be a tradition of thought, which is not too much of a leap considering MacIntyre's labelling of 'Augustinian' and 'Aristotelian' as traditions, then is it in 'good order' currently or not? In his work *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry* (1990) MacIntyre notes and eventually dismisses the version of genealogy typified by Nietzsche (often represented within sociology through Foucault, Lyotard, and other poststructuralists).

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[196] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 350.
[197] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 222.

While genealogy is a useful tool in describing, it is poor at resolving the problems which it describes.[198] Genealogy is also a self-defeating prospect if taken to its natural end:

> We also have to recognize the parts played by logic, by the identification, for example, of contradiction, by appeals to evidence, by the practical reasoning exhibited in the actions through which Foucault's enquiries progressed or failed to progress towards a from time to time reformulated *telos,* and by his reevaluations of their success and failure. The standards in the light of which such reevaluations are made and such reasoning conducted are independent of the particular stages and moments of the temporary strategies through which the genealogist moves his or her overall projects forward, and the recognition accorded to them is necessary for the genealogist to find his or her own actions and utterances intelligible, let alone for them to be intelligible to anyone else. Hence once again it seems to be the case that the intelligibility of genealogy requires beliefs and allegiances of a kind precluded by the genealogical stance.[199]

The self-defeating nature of genealogy goes further, with the genealogist almost inevitably relying on the *identity* and *continuity* of persons.[200] This continuity is a central part of tradition which the genealogist seeks to overcome. The genealogist might be said to owe an account of what they mean by both identity and continuity, but in doing so they must avoid "presupposing the very kind of metaphysical thesis which it is the central aim of genealogy to discredit. The genealogist, it might seem, owes it to him or herself to be as suspicious of his or her own ascriptions of selfhood as of everyone else's."[201] The temptation of using the idiom of debt must be resisted however as it is "itself an expression of just that belief in accountability which … the genealogist must be committed to repudiating."[202] The difficulty (or inability) with which the genealogist deals with questions of selfhood and continuity is obvious in the fractured idea of self put forward by Deleuze, but praised by Foucault.[203]

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[198] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 114.
[199] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 55, emphasis in original.
[200] Ibid., 205.
[201] Ibid., 206.
[202] Ibid., 206.
[203] Ibid., 208. These concerns about selfhood and continuity lead to the metaphor of the 'mask' which one wears in different encounters, taken up within sociology by symbolic interactionists from Mead to Goffman.

Genealogy's rejection of continuity and solid identity are connected with its reliance on a nihilistic bedrock of theory. If there is *no* meaning in life, then that entails there being no *singular* or *proper* meaning. This leaves room for the development of strong relativist positions: where some nihilists might argue that there can be *no* values with any base, others lend credence to there being no base for the idea of any *singular* values.

The noting of the self-defeating nature of genealogy as a constructive project is important considering the role genealogical thought has played in the development of many branches of sociology (not even touching on Foucault's influence, Weber's understanding of values was largely indebted to Nietzsche).[204] The connection of sociology to this Nietzschean influence is also a connection to what MacIntyre calls 'emotivism,'[205] which afflicted not only Weber but also Goffman.[206] Emotivism to MacIntyre is "the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character,"[207] and as such it is easy to see the Nietzchean influence therein. Another consequence to sociology, noted above, is that of the genealogical approach to the self and its continuity (or lack thereof). It is thus appropriate to say that the contemporary tactic within sociology of adopting various sociological worldviews for different projects and then discarding them without concern for the potential of contradiction shows how deeply genealogy has left its impact.

Tradition is what MacIntyre proposes can overcome the failing of genealogy and if genealogy is so represented within sociology then perhaps tradition has the chance to overcome

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[204] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 26.

[205] In his works from *After Virtue* (1981) to *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999) MacIntyre refers to this idea as 'emotivism,' but expands his understanding of this and related concepts under the term 'expressivism' in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*.

[206] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 26, 115.

[207] Ibid., 11-12, emphasis in original.

any inherited faults passed along to sociology through this Nietzschean heritage. Is this an accurate and adequate account of the impact of relativism on sociology, as transmitted by genealogical theory and methodologies? Some of the strengths in such an account are that it explicitly connects the discipline of sociology. It also attacks the underlying relativistic problems within genealogy, which gives it teeth outside of critiques of genealogy (making it somewhat transferrable as a critique to non-genealogical, but still relativistic, influences on and within sociology).

What such a MacIntyrean critique does not account for is that sociology is not merely genealogical: it is a discipline with a wide and varied history of theoretical influences, including some which reject genealogical methods for a variety of reasons.[208] In addition, one must consider the positive influence that genealogical methods have had on the sociologist's ability to engage with cultures and contexts of studies. By adhering – more or less strongly – to the idea that "there is a multiplicity of perspectives and idioms, but no single world which they are of or about,"[209] and that "all claims to truth are and can only be made from the standpoint afforded by some particular perspective,"[210] that there is "no such thing as truth-as-such, but only truth-from-one-or-other-point-of-view,"[211] sociologists have been able to put aside their biases (to a degree) and engage more earnestly and directly with various subject matters and the lived experiences of others.

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[208] Early positivist sociologists would have a different reason for rejecting genealogical theory than would a feminist conflict theorist, or a symbolic interactionist. For a history of different philosophical and methodological influences in sociology, see the introductory chapter of Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln, eds., *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc., 1994). For a history of the intertwining and dissonance between different theoretical influences in social theory, see Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction,* (Cambridge, UK: MPG Books Group, 2013).

[209] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 36.

[210] Ibid., 36.

[211] Ibid., 36.

Is it possible for MacIntyre's proposal that tradition-based understandings of inquiry can provide a resource to engage, fairly and effectively, with ethical and normative questions? If so, is it one which can be brought to bear on sociological theory and practice? To answer this question, and to provide some of the necessary tools should this be the case to aiding Habermas' normative sociological project in the upcoming discussion chapter, there first must be a proper account given of MacIntyre's understanding(s) of 'traditions of inquiry.'

3.7. Traditions of Inquiry

Two essential questions of MacIntyre, which need to be answered for the purposes of this thesis, are: what does he mean by 'traditions of inquiry,' and what are the consequences of his meaning? By that I mean, what things are precluded, enabled, or required by the specifics of what he means by traditions of inquiry. Such seemingly simple questions are stymied right from the off by the fact that MacIntyre never straightforwardly defines 'tradition,' and over and above that, his "understanding of tradition evolves over the near decade that elapses between the first edition of *After Virtue* and the publication of his Gifford Lectures."[212] This evolution is also not a one-way street, as MacIntyre "moves between a wider concept of tradition as an overall social and moral orientation, and a more limited concept of a tradition as a focused scientific or moral inquiry."[213] While MacIntyre gives some helpful direction in the understanding of his use of tradition,[214] he never gives a hard and fast definition.

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[212] Jean Porter, "Tradition in the Recent Work of Alasdair MacIntyre," in *Alasdair MacIntyre*, ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 38.

[213] Jean Porter, "Tradition in the Recent Work of Alasdair MacIntyre," 39.

[214] Ibid., 67, notes 2 and 5. MacIntyre notes in both *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* that "a tradition is an extended argument over the goods that constitute it," qualifying that "participants in a tradition must be aware of themselves as such, which would presumably not apply to every historically extended dispute over the nature of the good." MacIntyre also asserts in *Whose Justice?* that "a tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict, namely

One of the helpful descriptions (perhaps a definition by proxy) he gives are his descriptions of traditionalists, largely covered in his work *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (1990). A traditionalist is someone who, by MacIntyre's meaning, "self-consciously work[s] within [a] historical tradition of inquiry."[215] These people:

> [S]ee the pursuit of understanding as a matter not merely of acquiring items of knowledge but of pursuing intellectual questions and problems that they have not invented but inherited. This notion of intellectual inheritance raises the individual inquirer above the peculiarities of his or her own time, but without removing the whole enterprise into the impossible realm of the timeless. In this implies that "science," broadly conceived, requires membership in a tradition – a movement of thought from and through history. Accordingly, acceptance of this inheritance implies that a large part of the pursuit of understanding is exploration or coherent self-understanding, discovering what we know by grasping who we are.[216]

In so describing the inhabitants of a tradition, it is understandable why MacIntyre has such a strong connection with history and still remains someone committed to non-relativism; his understanding allows for historical particularity, but also the necessary continuity of that particularity, which precludes the disconnectedness of relativism. As Gordon Graham puts it: "History is concerned with what has been. Philosophy is a normative inquiry, concerned with what, rationally, we ought to think and believe. It is now possible to see how … tradition fuses historical understanding and normative judgment."[217]

Another way to consider what traditions means is to consider a tradition as an ongoing *conversation*, extended in time, an understanding hinted at, but not explicitly made clear, by

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between proponents of the tradition and its opponents, and internally among those who would interpret its central tenets in different ways."

[215] Gordon Graham, "MacIntyre on History and Philosophy," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28.

[216] Gordon Graham, "MacIntyre on History and Philosophy," 28.

[217] Ibid., 30.

MacIntyre himself, when he discusses the role and importance of community in contextualizing

conversations:

> *Conversations are extended in time*. At later points someone may always refer
> back to some earlier point with a variety of purposes: to evaluate what as only
> emerged cumulatively, to examine the consistence or inconsistency of what has
> been said, to put an old point in a new light or vice versa. Crucial to polemical
> conversations therefore is how the different and disagreeing participants
> understand the identity and continuity of those with whom they speak, of how
> each stands in relation to his or her past and future utterances in what he or she
> says or writes now. Underlying the conflicts of polemical conversations are the
> rival participants' presuppositions about continuing personal identity through
> time.[218]

These concerns about individuals' histories, and their continuing identities, are easily

contextualized into the tradition(s) of thought they inhabit, and the role they play on the shaping

of those identities and histories. In drawing this connection I am noting MacIntyre's argument

that *traditions themselves* may be understood to an extent in a similar manner: it is only insofar

as we exist in a tradition – that we are rational agents within an ongoing historical continuity

represented by a tradition of thought – that we can participate with others in conversations both

large and small. Therefore, traditions themselves, and their ability to facilitate the dialogue

between themselves and other traditions through their adherents (participants, inhabitants, or

what have you) can be understood as conversations, extended in time. Taking a page from

Richard J. Bernstein, a "true 'conversation' – which is not to be confused with idle chatter or a

violent babble of competing voices – is an extended and open dialogue which presupposes a

background of intersubjective agreements and a tacit sense of relevance."[219]

Tradition, like a conversation, requires certain presupposed agreements, both of *what is*

relevant and of *how to discuss things*. The differences between traditions – and their

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[218] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, 196, emphasis added.
[219] Richard J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, 2.

commensurability with one another – is largely defined by these background agreements and senses of relevance. When MacIntyre speaks of traditions having difficulty communicating, it would be for the same reasons that people speaking two different languages would have difficulty communicating: they do not share the appropriate background to make intelligible the other's attempt at communication.[220] Indeed, MacIntyre notes that part of what a tradition is, is an "argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict," the two kinds of conflict being conflict between the those within and outside a given tradition, and between those solely within the same tradition.[221]

So what *does* MacIntyre mean by 'tradition of inquiry'? It would seem from the sources in which he writes that a tradition of inquiry refers to a *historically situated, malleable way of understanding, and coming to understanding, that allows its inhabitants to consciously engage with it over both questions which it is familiar with and those that it is not familiar with* (to variable success rates, based on the levels of familiarity/non-familiarity). Importantly, it can provide standards which the inhabitants can use when encountering alien questions and situations for the purpose of making them intelligible. What are the consequences of this meaning? A positive consequence would be that traditions of inquiry are not isolated and impregnable social contexts that are incapable of interacting with one another, but rather prereflective backgrounds, *which can come to be reflected upon as well,* which allow for the potential dialogue between past, present, and future inhabitants of one or more traditions.[222]

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[220] See chapter XIX, 'Tradition and Translation,' in Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 370-88.
[221] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 12.
[222] Ibid., 350. "It does not follow that what is said from within on tradition cannot be heard or overheard by those in another. Traditions which differ in the most radical way over certain subject matters may in respect of others share beliefs, images, and texts. Considerations urged from within one tradition may be ignored by those conducting enquiry or debate within another only at the cost, by their own standards, of excluding relevant good reasons for believing or disbelieving this or that or for acting in one way rather than another."

A concern of someone looking at MacIntyre's work on traditions of inquiry might be the potential for relativism (which it has already been noted, MacIntyre rejects). By what criteria could one judge between multiple traditions' approaches to answering, or the answers which they arrive at? How can we judge one tradition as better at something than another? MacIntyre argues in a dialectical manner that sometimes *x* tradition may have internal logical problems which it is unable to resolve internally. Upon meeting with tradition *y*, tradition *x* may find that the tools presented by *y* surpass its own for dealing with its internal inconsistencies, in which case *in that instance* tradition *y* would be superior *regarding that internal problem.* If one were to multiply this example over the course of an extended interaction between *x* and *y* tradition, it might be shown that *y* tradition can – by and large – resolve many of the problems of *x* tradition without inheriting anything from it in return. In which case it could be said that *y* tradition is largely the superior of the two (if it were also able to resolve its own internal problems).[223] In a Hegelian manner, MacIntyre never claims that tradition *y* will simply replace tradition *x*, but rather that solutions to problems will come out of the problems themselves, and aspects of both *x* and *y* will be passed along into the future dialectic between and within traditions. Specifically this takes the form of the ability to "understand the theses, arguments, and concepts of [one's] rival in such a

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[223] It is important to note that the history of the world has largely been one which includes the violent forcing of the beliefs and understandings of one group upon another. The history of colonialism is an example of this. Concern that MacIntyre's tradition-theoretic approach might be implicitly pro-colonial is a valid concern. I would argue however that because MacIntyre is arguing for the rational engagement between different traditions, wherein one must be shown *by its own standards* to have failed in this or that regard, that this necessarily precludes acceptance of any colonial or otherwise non-rational uses of force to impose the will of one tradition upon another. This understanding of MacIntyre would seem to be in accordance of the critical themes within his work, influenced by Marx and rejections of capitalist domination, as well as Thomist precepts that good is to be done, and evil avoided.

way that they are able to view themselves from such an alien standpoint and to recharacterize their own beliefs in an appropriate manner from the alien perspective of the rival tradition."[224]

MacIntyre notes as the 'relativist challenge' to his project the contention that it is impossible to choose between traditions regarding premises of any kind:

> It may therefore seem to be the case that we are confronted with the rival and competing claims of a number of traditions to our allegiance in respect to our understanding or practical rationality and justice, among which we can have no good reasons to decide in favor of any one rather than the others. Each has its own standards of reasoning; each provides its own background beliefs. To offer one kind of reason, to appeal to one set of background beliefs, will already be to have assumed the standpoint of one particular tradition. But if we make no such assumption, then we can have no good reason to give more weight to the contentions advanced by one particular tradition than to those advanced by its rivals. … if the only available standards of rationality are those made available by and within traditions, then no issue between contending traditions is rationally decidable. To assert or to conclude this rather than that can be rational relative to the standards of some particular tradition, but not rational as such. There can be no rationality as such. ... Let us call this the relativist challenge.[225]

The relativist then argues that each tradition – if such is an appropriate manner of conceiving human communities of thought – is a self-contained, and necessarily isolated unit. This isolation leads to the relativist position of being unable to interact with – let alone rationally decided between the claims of – different traditions of inquiry. This relativist challenge is opposed by a 'perspectivist' challenge. While the relativist challenge "rest upon a denial that rational debate between and rational choice among rival traditions is possible; the perspectivist challenge puts in question the possibility of making truth-claims from within any one tradition."[226]

Having discussed MacIntyre's understanding of traditions of inquiry and their various importance and application within his work, I lastly must move on to his formulation of the

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[224] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 167. See the whole of chapter X for more on the interaction between rival traditions.
[225] Ibid., 351-52.
[226] Ibid., 352.

specific normative drivers within his thought. To elaborate on this, I will draw on MacIntyre's ideas of human goods, human communities, and human flourishing.

      3.8. MacIntyre's Normative Tools: Human Goods, Communities, and Flourishing

Three interrelated ideas that MacIntyre draws on and develops throughout his intellectual career, but especially from *After Virtue* (1981) onwards, are the ideas of human goods, human communities, and human flourishing. MacIntyre conceives of human goods as the component parts of a worthwhile quest; they are always objectives to be aimed at in a teleological manner. He says that "[t]he unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest."[227] This narrative can only be ordered in any sense by "some at least partly determinate conception of the final *telos* ... Some conception of the good for man is required."[228] This final telos, and the quest for it, helps order the component goods of human life: "It is in looking for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to order other goods, for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to extend our understanding of the purpose and content of the virtues, for a conception of *the* good which will enable us to understand the place of integrity and constancy in life, that we initially define the kind of life which is a quest for the good."[229] Here we can see some initial semblance of the role that human virtues play in our relation to quests for the good(s) of human life.[230] MacIntyre argues that "[t]he 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,

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[227] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 218.
[228] Ibid., 218, emphasis in original.
[229] Ibid., 218, emphasis in original.
[230] It is important to note that MacIntyre has moved away from explicit questions of '*The* Good' to questions of human goods, plural, over the course of his career. While still engaged with ideas of the unifying idea that makes this or that good good, he doesn't motivate his search in the metaphysics of a Platonic Form.

dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and ... knowledge of the good."[231]

So if human goods are some kind of ethical goal for humans, and human virtues are the habitual tools we use to move towards rather than away from these goals, then what role does community play in understandings of human good? Community creates the context within which common goods can be understood and realized. These are opposed to 'public goods,' but not, it is important to note, antithetical to the goods of individual members of the community. Common argument from Adam Smith onwards opposed individual and public goods:

> In such a debate those who argue in favor of regarding this or that as a public good will often claim that by so arguing they are promoting the common good. This unfortunate rhetoric has the effect of obscuring the difference between public goods and common goods. For public goods can be understood as goods to be achieved by individuals qua individuals, albeit only in cooperation with other individuals, and to be enjoyed by individuals qua individuals, while common goods are only to be enjoyed and achieved ... by individuals qua members of various groups or qua participants in various activities.[232]

By so arguing, advocates for so-called 'public goods' create a narrative of opposition between the individual's concern and the 'public.' Making it seem like one must always choose either one's self *or* the 'others' that make up one's surrounding social circumstances.

This 'me or them' dichotomy in thought about public goods was, according to MacIntyre, begun in its current form largely by David Hume. "In his moral theorizing he invites his readers to think of themselves and others only as individuals, quite apart from their social roles, motivated by their activities and relationships by what they find agreeable or useful in others and in themselves, with no standard of good beyond that provided by their agreement in sentiments

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[231] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 218.
[232] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 168-69.

with others." [233] But the Aristotelian and Thomist ideas which influence MacIntyre help him

propose that regarding human goods:

> [W]hat is of the first importance ... [is] that individuals should understand that they can achieve their own individual goods only through achieving in the company of others those common goods that we share as family members, collaborators in the workplace, as participants in a variety of local groups and societies, and as fellow citizens. Take away the notion of such common goods and what is left is a conception of the individual abstracted from her or his social relationships and from the norms of justice that must inform those relationships, if the individual is to flourish. [234]

Noted here is the idea of human flourishing which I will address shortly. First one must ask the

question: Must the solution to normative problems within sociology be solved by religiously

informed theory (i.e., Thomist Aristotelianism)? The answer is no. While the claims of Thomas

Aquinas were obviously religiously informed, "the claims advanced by the early twentieth-

century Thomists, and especially by those of them who understood themselves as Thomistic

Aristotelians, both in philosophic arguments and in the practice of politics, were secular claims

addressed to their fellow citizens of any faith or none." [235] Despite moving into the Catholic faith,

and a faith-informed Thomism in his life, MacIntyre continues to be informed by a non-theistic

Aristotelianism, and presents all of his arguments in terms of a good that is applicable and

achievable to all, regardless of faith or lack thereof.

As we see above, the ideas of human goods which *are* such insofar as they are social

goods, not to the exclusion of the individuals, but rather to be sought out as individual *qua*

member of a community, are connected with both community and the idea of human flourishing.

While we've established the social aspect of human goods, a little bit more light can still be

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[233] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 82.
[234] Ibid., 106-7.
[235] Ibid., 106.

shone on what MacIntyre means by 'community' before moving on to laying out his idea of human flourishing. Many who argue for community based ethics and social policies fall on a spectrum of social theory consisting of – but not limited to – anarchism, socialism, communism, communitarianism, conservativism, as well as neoPlatonist *polis* based ethics. The problem with many of these positions is their applicability in the contemporary social world: how realistic is it, say, to transpose an ethics born of – and intended to be enacted in – a 4th Century B.C.E. Athens into a 21st C Canada, United States, or European Union? Not only is the size difference enormous (in terms of population and land mass), but the bureaucratization of government, the cultural and historical differences, and the different traditions of inquiry which have become dominant – as MacIntyre himself notes – make it seem like a fantasy at best to assume one can merely 'seek the good' in the manner of Plato or Aristotle.

This is not, however, what MacIntyre proposes. While the *polis* was the political unit of the city state of Athens *and* the community of the time, MacIntyre recognizes the difference in time and place which he must engage with. He seeks to focus on "the common goods of associations and relationship that are intermediate between on the one hand the nation-state and on the other the individual and the nuclear family."[236] What is it about the modern nation-state and the contemporary family that makes them incapable of "providing the kind of communal association within which this type of common good can be achieved?"[237] The nation-state's concern for money, as well as its distribution of goods, "in no way reflects a common mind

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[236] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 131.
[237] Ibid., 131.

arrived at through widespread shared deliberation governed by norms of rational enquiry."[238]

The size of the modern nation-state, as already mentioned, precludes this.[239]

This is not to say that one should move to the woods and attempt to start a commune in the style of the 1960s, but rather that one cannot look to the contemporary nation-state for an account of the goods of human life, nor for aid in fulfilling them through the inculcation of the appropriate virtues.[240] However, those seeking to foster the type of communities, virtues, and quests for goods that MacIntyre proposes "will recognize that [the nation-state] is an ineliminable feature of the contemporary landscape and they will not despise the resources that it affords. ... But they will also recognize that the modern state cannot provide a political framework informed by the just generosity necessary to achieve the common goods of networks of giving and receiving."[241]

If this it is the case that nation-states have this impact, then what of the family? MacIntyre argues that "[f]amilies at their best are forms of association in which children are first nurtured, and then educated for and initiated into the activities of an adult world in which their parents' participatory activities provide them both with resources and models."[242] It follows then that:

> [T]he quality of life of a family is in key part a function of the quality of the relationships of the individual members of the family to and in a variety of other institutions and associations ... it is insofar as children learn to recognize and to pursue their own, and parents and other adult members of the family continue to recognize and to pursue, the goods internal to the practices of which such

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[238] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 131.
[239] Ibid., 131.
[240] Ibid., 131-32.
[241] Ibid., 133.
[242] Ibid., 133.

associations and institutions are the milieu that the goods of family life are realized.[243]

The family helps facilitate the pursuit of human goods, then, only insofar as it helps connect the young to those extra-familial associations which make up 'community' as MacIntyre conceives it. Generally and characteristically, the "goods of family life are achieved in and with the goods of various types of local community. And generally and characteristically the common good of a family can only be achieved in the course of achieved in the course of achieving the common goods of the local community of which it is a part."[244] In so arguing, MacIntyre's ideas about family are similar to those already stated about individuals regarding common goods. Where an individual must conceive of their individual goods as being intertwined with common goods, so that they don't understand themselves as choosing between advantageous selfishness, and unfortunately necessary public service – but rather that community engagement and goods are enjoyed as an individual *qua* community member. In the same way, the goods of families are to be understood as interconnected with common goods, so that one must understand their goods being fulfilled and aimed at as individual *qua* family member *qua* community member.

MacIntyre argues then that "[n]either the state nor the family then is the form of association whose common good is to be both served and sustained by the virtues of acknowledged dependence. It must instead be some form of local community within which the activities of families, workplaces, schools, clinics, clubs dedicated to debate and clubs dedicated to games and sports, and religious congregations may all find a place."[245] This understanding of community, as a place – the sole place – where the virtue of acknowledged dependence may –

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[243] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 133-34.
[244] Ibid., 134.
[245] Ibid., 135.

indeed must – be exercised makes it important to understand what MacIntyre means by a virtue

of acknowledged dependence.

In *Dependent Rational Animals* (1999)*,* MacIntyre puts forward the "moral importance of

acknowledging not only such vulnerabilities and afflictions, but also our consequence

dependences,"[246] regarding our animality and associated mortality. This is important because we

ideally move from the dependence on the reasoning powers of others (parents, teachers, etc) to

independent practical reasoning, and this is aided by conscious acknowledgement of our

dependence relating to reasoning.[247] MacIntyre's understanding of the virtues and their role in

our development into independent practical reasoners makes acknowledging dependence

important:

> [I]f we are to understand the virtues as enabling us to become independent
> practical reasoners, just because they also enable us to participate in relationships
> of giving and receiving through which our ends as practical reasoners are to be
> achieved, we need to extend our enquiries a good deal further, by recognizing that
> any adequate education into the virtues will be one that enables us to give their
> due to a set of virtues that are the necessary counterpart to the virtues of
> independence, the virtues of acknowledged dependence.[248]

Some of the specific virtues which MacIntyre notes fall under the category of 'virtues

acknowledging dependence' include: charity, taking pity, and doing good; all taken from

Aquinas.[249] But he also notes understandings of acknowledged dependence from other traditions

of thought, one example being from traditional Lakota thought: the term '*wancantognaka,*'

meaning the virtue of "individuals who recognize responsibilities to immediate family, extended

family, and tribe and who express that recognition by their participation in ceremonial acts of

uncalculated giving, ceremonies of thanksgiving, of remembrance, and of the conferring of

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[246] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 8.
[247] Ibid., 120.
[248] Ibid., 120.
[249] Ibid., 120.

honor. 'Wancantaognaka' names a generosity that I owe to all those others who also owe it to me."[250] The understanding of acknowledged dependence is also represented within Marxian and socialist thought, especially in the likes of maxims such as 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need.'[251]

Why is the acknowledgement of dependence important? MacIntyre argues that it is important for a host of reasons. Chief among these is that what agents need, "if they are not to be the victims of … self-deception is … to see and understand themselves as perceptive others see and understand them. What they need is to judge and to act from a first person standpoint informed by a practical self-knowledge that can only be acquired from a third person standpoint."[252] This ability of subjects to engage with both first and third person self-understanding is essential for proper judgement.[253] What MacIntyre argues is that "[t]he objectivity that dependence on others can achieve is indeed objectivity, a rescuing of the agent from imprisonment within her or his subjectivity."[254] In so arguing, MacIntyre is showing the role that acknowledged dependence can and should play in the ability of rational human subject to understand themselves and thus judge for themselves.

The last normative tool that MacIntyre will bring to the upcoming dialogue with Habermas is his idea of human flourishing, which we will see is connected closely with the already noted ideas of human goods, virtues, communities, and the acknowledged dependencies therein. "What it is to flourish is not of course the same for dolphins as it is for gorillas or for humans but it is one and the same concept of flourishing that finds application to members of

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[250] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 120.
[251] Ibid., 130.
[252] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 157.
[253] Ibid., 160-61.
[254] Ibid., 162.

different … species. … What a plant or animal needs is what it needs to flourish *qua* member of its particular species. And what it needs to flourish is to develop the distinctive powers that it possesses *qua* member of that species."[255] These powers, these distinctive characteristics possessed by say, humans *qua* members of the human species, is not the sum of what is meant by flourishing. However, "to flourish is always to flourish *in virtue of* possessing some such set of characteristics."[256] What MacIntyre argues is distinctively characteristic about humans qua members of the human species is that we are practical reasoners about goods, capable of subordinating certain goods-as-means to greater goods-as-ends, and analyzing cooperatively whether something constitutes a good at all.[257] Human beings, he argues, "need to learn to understand themselves as practical reasoners about goods, about what on particular occasions it is best for them to do and about how it is best for them to live out their lives."[258] Because of this, our "social relationships are indispensable to [our] flourishing."[259]

We have already seen some of the ways in which human beings, understood as MacIntyre understands them, must be importantly connected to their social relationships. Humans can be threatened in many ways that other species can: poison, starvation, lack of water, predators, etc. But the "development of human beings into effective practical reasoners is threatened in additional ways."[260] One important difference between us and other animals is that we must, in various points in our lives, overcome our 'wants' and separate ourselves from particular desires.[261] Another important difference is that we at various points in our lives may not actually

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[255] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 64-65, emphasis in original.
[256] Ibid., 65, emphasis in original.
[257] Ibid., 66-67.
[258] Ibid., 67.
[259] Ibid., 67.
[260] Ibid., 68.
[261] Ibid., 68-69.

know what is good or best for ourselves, and thus must learn to learn from others. This is a

process of becoming a practical reasoner, wherein "[w]hat each of us has to do, in order to

develop our powers as independent reasoners, and so to flourish *qua* members of our species, is

to make the transition from accepting what we are taught by those earliest teachers to making our

own independent judgments about goods, judgments that we are able to justify rationally to

ourselves and to others as furnishing us with good reasons for acting in this way rather than

that."[262] The transition from a fully accepting learner, to an independent reasoner capable of

analyzing and providing justification for their own actions, thoughts, and desires, is largely

dependent on our having our particular usage of language, MacIntyre argues.[263] While MacIntyre

acknowledges that what it is to flourish varies from cultural and practical context to context, "in

every context it is as someone exercises in a relevant way the capacities of an independent

practical reasoner that her or his potentialities for flourishing in a specifically human way

[develop]."[264]

      Human flourishing then is for MacIntyre a manner of engaging with what he sees as the

prerequisites for achieving – or at least aiming at – human *telos.* Without our abilities, or

distinctively human (qua member of the human species) abilities of independent practical

reasoning are developed, we are capable of engaging with questions of goods, and thus questions

of *the* good which represents human *telos*. MacIntyre claims that "if we want to understand how

it is good for humans to live, we need to know what it is to be excellent as an independent

practical reasoner," that is, what virtues help maintain and improve one's capacity to reason

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[262] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 71, emphasis in original.
[263] Ibid., 71-72.
[264] Ibid., 77.

independently.[265] These, as we have seen, include acknowledged dependency and other virtues which allow us to recognize the importance of community to our ability to engage in good lives, specifically as individuals *qua* members of a community. Now as we see however, this extends to our ability to flourish *qua* members of our species.

MacIntyre's epistemological focus on traditions of inquiry is simultaneously an ethical focus which unifies his normative claims. He reveals this when he notes the important uses of, and requirements for, inquiry: 1) for identifying a set of goods that contribute to the good life, 2) for exercising of the ability to make good choices between goods, and acknowledging the virtues these good choices require, and 3) that decision making requires the existence of certain types of social relations, which in turn means that the kinds of communities we inhabit are important to the kinds of inquiry we are capable of pursuing.[266] And while he doesn't propose that there is some singular overriding tangible good (in the abstract Platonic Forms sense) which one can tangibly grasp in their life, "what matters for the good life is not so much which choice is made as the way in which such choices are made, the nature and quality of the deliberation that goes into the making of them."[267] Indeed, MacIntyre strongly states that the good life is one of constant striving towards goods, aided by virtues; one informed by the inherent telos of human activity. He argues that a directed life in which one dies before achieving those goods they are aimed towards is not – as some might argue – a failure:

> To live well is to act so as to move toward achieving the best goods of which one is capable and so as to become the kind of agent capable of achieving those goods. But there is no particular finite good the achievement of which perfects and completes one's life. There is always something else and something more to be attained, whatever life's attainments. The perfection and completion of life

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[265] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 77.
[266] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 222-224.
[267] Ibid., 223.

consists in an agent's having persisted in moving toward and beyond the best goods of which she or he knows.[268]

This of course presupposes further goods, the physics or metaphysics of which aren't necessarily important for the day-to-day struggle to engage in discourse over what tangible goods may exist in the achievable field of human action. What also comes out in MacIntyre's repeated focus on the deliberations that go into questions about what human goods are, and how one can go about aiming at, and moving towards them is language use, and the role that language plays in said deliberations and dialogues.[269] This is important because it mirrors Habermas' focus on language and its importance for navigating normative questions with(in) communicative action, and helps create another theoretical point of contact for the imminent discussion chapter.

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[268] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity,* 315.

[269] Ibid., 205. "[S]uch dialogue requires openness on our part to the widest range of relevant objects that can be advanced by [our partner in dialogue] against whatever case it is that we are making. Such dialogue is therefore a cooperative form of enquiry, which fails insofar as it becomes too adversarial. It characteristically has its starting point in some immediate practical disagreement, but a disagreement that, unlike many others, cannot be resolved without confronting at least to some extent theoretical issues." All such dialogues must necessarily be entered into linguistically – whether these dialogues are personal, immediate dialogues, or the 'conversations extended in time' represented by the interactions of entire traditions, the point still holds that they are enacted in language.

4. Discussion

4.1. My Two Critiques of Habermas' Project

As noted in chapter two, there are several problems with Habermas' normative project. The first critique which has motivated the bringing together of Habermas with MacIntyre here is Habermas' entanglement with the 'is-ought' problem in regards to the 'normativity' of his project: is he merely describing (accurately, if not prescriptively) normativity, or is he participating in the achievement of normativity? The second critique is regarding the contextualization of, and applicability of, an integral part of Habermas' theory – the lifeworld and its boundaries, both social and historical. How do I propose MacIntyre can help address, enlighten, or overcome these problems? To answer this we need to first make sure MacIntyre is 'translatable' enough with the works of Habermas, such that he indeed *can* help. For these purposes, I will largely draw upon the selfsame concept of 'translatability' which was noted in the introduction to help facilitate this dialogue between Habermas and MacIntyre.

MacIntyre has in many ways radically different understandings of modernity and the Enlightenment than has Habermas, and this offers problems, and at least must be discussed as areas where their differences might prevent dialogue between the two regarding the above critiques. What also must be shown is that there are, despite the differences regarding modernity and the Enlightenment, theoretical connections between MacIntyre and Habermas. Theoretical connections substantial enough to ground dialogue between the two, and justify MacIntyre's application to the resolution of my critiques of Habermas. It is to the connections between the two which I will first turn. My aim with comparing and contrasting Habermas and MacIntyre thusly is MacIntyrean in nature: I seek to conceptualize Habermas in MacIntyrean terms, and

MacIntyre in Habermasian terms, in the manner which MacIntyre has noted is important for dialogue between two persons, occupying two different traditions of inquiry.

It is important to reiterate at this point that while I respect the theoretic undertakings and scholarship of Habermas – I would not have chosen to engage with him had the case been different – I am not aiming for an exactly half-and-half synthesis in the coming discussion. Half Habermas and half MacIntyre is not my goal, but rather an argument for a more MacIntyrean position for Habermas.

4.2. Shared Rejection of Postmodernity and Conservativism

Implicitly and explicitly, throughout the works of both MacIntyre and Habermas there is a trend of rejecting both the consequences and endorsement of both postmodernity and conservativism. As with some of the above examples, the rejection is more or less explicit in the works of both theorists at various times and places. Postmodernism entails certain things: atomistic individualism, relativism, and perhaps even nihilism. Conservativism, other things: dogmatism, a resistance to change based in ideology rather than good reason, and sometimes even superstition. Habermas rejects both postmodernism[270] and conservativism because of their 'antimodernism,' because modernity is something he sees as an incomplete project, still to be finished – opposed by both postmodernity and conservativism.[271] The postmodernist, often trapped within the philosophy of the subject, and a philosophy of hard relativism, atomizes the individual in a way which derails or outright prevents the engagement of persons in communicative action aimed at mutual understanding. The conservative, often trapped within a

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[270] This is largely and explicitly outlined in his chapters on Nietzsche and Foucault in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity.*

[271] Thomas McCarthy, translator's introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, v.

rigid traditionalism, or influenced by capitalist theory (in the form of liberal-conservatives),[272]

excludes the interaction between certain groups of persons towards any kind of mutual

understanding as well. Habermas then rejects these theoretical bases due to their inherent

opposition to the legacy of the Enlightenment represented in modernity, and the project yet-to-

be-completed therein. Postmodernism opposed the ideas that there can be an objective standpoint

for knowledge, that reason is embedded in history, and that discourses of social liberation were

possible.[273] Conservativism (especially strains which would have been supportive of the

Counter-Enlightenment) opposes the kind of progress which a modernity project, rightly

understood and back on track, as Habermas conceives it.[274]

Despite the oft-heard cry of 'conservative!' directed at MacIntyre due to his focus on the

value of tradition, and despite the ostensible postmodern element represented in his

historicism,[275] MacIntyre rejects both of these positions. MacIntyre rejects postmodernism

largely because of its individualizing relativism.[276] Despite MacIntyre's respect for the

importance of Nietzsche's scholarship, MacIntyre attacks the Nietzschean roots of much of

contemporary postmodern thought, largely due to its inconsistent and insufficient account of the

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[272] As the reader may or may not know, what are referred to in the contemporary moment as 'conservative' parties, ideas, individuals, policies, etc, are almost always Classical Liberal variants of the thing in question. Many 'liberal' versions of the aforementioned categories sit somewhere between socialist influence and Classical Liberal influence. What Habermas, and others, mean by liberal-conservative would be a specification to delineate between those conservatives influenced by Classical Liberalism, Classical Conservatives (almost unheard of in the contemporary moment), and Neoconservatives (who certainly do exist, in the United States and elsewhere).

[273] Craig Calhoun, et al., eds., *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, 438.

[274] Ibid., 438.

[275] J. L. A. Garcia, "Modernit(ist) Moral Philosophy and MacIntyrean Critique," 98, 104.

[276] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 351-52. "[I]f the only available standards of rationality are those made available by and within traditions, then no issue between contending traditions is rationally decidable. To assert or to conclude this rather than that can be rational relative to the standards of some particular tradition, but not rational as such. There can be no rationality as such. … Let us call this the relativist challenge." J. L. A. Garcia, "Modernit(ist) Moral Philosophy and MacIntyrean Critique," 105. "Relativism is wrong in that it is false – indeed, as MacIntyre has reversed the expected order, it is narrow minded – to assume that there is no hope, in principle, for us to get to a point from which a rational choice among traditions can be made. However, nothing in that means it will be easy, or that most of us are already in a position to make one."

self,[277] as it represents a stumbling block for the kind of rational progress which he seeks to give an account of. Both MacIntyre and Habermas reject Nietzsche's theory that the world is one characterized by struggles for power as preclusive of any kind of social transformation or quest for human good(s). Such a world, one picked up on by Foucault,[278] precludes any kind of communicative action – or reasoning through language over goods – which allow for the sincerity of individuals, a requisite for progressive communication for both MacIntyre and Habermas.

It is easy to see how some could view MacIntyre as a conservative: he is an open Catholic, much of his work focuses on Aristotle and Aquinas – theorists who have been used to justify very conservative positions in the past, he is fairly labelled a 'virtue ethicist,' and he ardently argues the value of tradition as a conceptual tool for understanding how we go – and how we ought to go – about resolving questions about human goods. Despite all this, he is also heavily influenced by Marx,[279] and takes a very non-conservative (indeed, anticonservative in places) position from his Aristotelian, Thomist, and virtue ethics influences: "[t]he notion that the MacIntyre of the *After Virtue* project is some sort of social and political conservative is given the lie by the extent to which his later work emphasizes the ways in which virtue theory and natural law ethics are countercultural and indeed revolutionary."[280]

Philosophically, MacIntyre seeks a 'middle way' between the extremes of the philosophies of postmodernism and conservativism,[281] a way to "connect morality tightly enough to history, sociology, psychology, and other domains to preclude it from being a matter of mere

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[277] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Enquiry*, 205-215.
[278] Ibid., 47.
[279] Mark C. Murphy, "Introduction," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.
[280] Mark C. Murphy, "Introduction," 2.
[281] Likely influenced by the Aristotelian understanding of the good being a mean between excess and deficiency.

preference or choice, but not so tightly that *what ought to be* becomes simply *what is guaranteed to be*."[282] This middle way is what he has sought throughout his works in the last 30 years: a valuation of tradition that isn't restrictively conservative; a focus on the importance of human communication and rationality for the achievement of human goods and flourishing; and the role virtues play in those achievements.

MacIntyre at various points in his works notes the importance of authority in tradition-based inquiry: all traditions start from "contingent commitments, usually embodied in oral or written texts that are initially given authoritative status."[283] Despite what might seem as a conservative trait in his works – a positive focus on various forms of authority, including moral, role, legal, and traditional authority – MacIntyre does not exclude the possibility of "fundamental dissent" from said authority.[284] In some of his later works, MacIntyre also describes how human rationality in part consists of being able to move from having to accept things based on authority to accepting things based on one's own judgment.[285] In supporting the importance of authority in certain circumstances, what MacIntyre is doing is building off an anti-postmodernist understanding that there is in certain circumstances 'right' ways to do, learn, or understand things. This necessitates that there will be persons of authority who have learned said 'right way' sufficiently to be, by the rules of whatever is in question, an authority. An authority known as such by virtue of their position within some tradition, be it an intellectual tradition, or a craft tradition, or what have you.

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[282] Mark C. Murphy, "Introduction," 6, emphasis in original.
[283] Jean Porter, "Tradition in the Recent Work of Alasdair MacIntyre," in *Alasdair MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 62-63.
[284] Jean Porter, "Tradition in the Recent Work of Alasdair MacIntyre," 63.
[285] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals,* 82-83, 90-91.

It is important to note that this means there are two kinds of authority for MacIntyre: the type which one is confronted with as a child (or similarly, as someone who is, child-like, taking one's first steps into a subject, practice, field of theory, etc), and the type which one is liable to achieve if one is – in the context of and to the standards of – some practice, masterful in their understanding/execution/ability to transmit faithfully some idea or practice. The latter kind of authority, it is important to distinguish, is exactly the kind which is represented in persons who take on the role of teacher to those 'children,' completing a circle of authority and persons' relation to it.

Neither of these understandings of authority are conservative *or* postmodern: the authority confronting the child eventually is superseded by the child's developing rationality, much to the chagrin of the conservative. Despite this, that initial authority is still valuable – drawing ire from the postmodernist. The authority of mastery of a thing implies the possibility of a radical meritocracy, but one – based in MacIntyre's acknowledgement of Marxist and Thomist thought – which acknowledges the struggles of different social groups and individuals. Once more, running rough against both the conservative, whose interest is piqued by ideas of meritocracy and dashed by acknowledgment of the struggles of women or persons of colour, and also postmodernists who reject all authority as solidified will(s) to power.

So how do MacIntyre and Habermas' rejections of these oppositional philosophic frameworks stack up to one another? While they both clearly reject the same things, and often for the same reasons (individualism, relativism, antiprogressiveness), their underlying reasons for doing so are, at some point, quite at odds with one another. The most obvious of these is that Habermas rejects postmodernism and conservativism due to the antimodern strains running through both, because he supports a project of working towards completing the 'project of

modernity.' A project within which he sees hope for a rationalized world which is not constricting in the manner of Weber's fears of an 'iron cage' of rationality, but liberating in its ability to enable mutual understanding among people through progressive communicative action. MacIntyre on the other hand rejects modernity along with postmodernity. This is not to say he denies the advances and advantages wrought by modernity, but rather that he claims it is impossible to move beyond the massive travesties likewise spawned of modernity, as they are integral to the same process which supposedly 'advances humanity.'[286]

MacIntyre's rejection of postmodernism largely derives from the *modern* themes that are continued within it. The atomistic individualism and nihilistic relativism of postmodernism are themes that, for MacIntyre, began with, and continue with, modernity. Important for defining sufficiently what is meant by atomistic individualism are the thoughts of Charles Taylor and Alexis de Tocqueville:

> The term 'atomism' is used loosely to characterize the doctrines of social-contract theory which arose in the seventeenth century and also successor doctrines which may not have made use of the notion of social contract but which inherited a vision of society as in some sense constituted by individuals for the fulfillment of ends which were primarily individual. … The term is also applied to contemporary doctrines which hark back to social-contract theory, or which try to defend in some sense the priority of the individual and his rights over society. [287]

This definition of atomism is broadly similar to the one I am using here. By tying it to 'individual,' (which by this definition would seem superfluous), I am trying to define the type of individualism which focuses on the individual *qua* individual, which leads to the atomization of the society which said individual inhabits. Each person becoming a realm unto themselves, beholden in the mind of the individual to no one and nothing.

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[286] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity,* 123-24.
[287] Charles Taylor, "Atomism," in *Communitarianism and Individualism,* ed. Shlomo Avineri and Avner de-Shalit, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 29.

This understanding is connected to Alexis de Tocqueville's understanding of individualism in *Democracy in America* ([1835/1840], 2000):

> *Individualism* is a recent expression that a new idea has brought into being. Our fathers only knew about egoism. Egoism is a passionate and exaggerated love of oneself, which leads man to relate everything only to himself alone and to prefer himself over all things. Individualism is a reflective and peaceful sentiment that disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellow men and to draw himself off to the side with his family and his friends in such a way that, after having thus created for himself a small society of his own use, he willingly abandons the larger society to itself. Egosim is born from a blind instinct; individualism proceeds from an erroneous judgement rather than a depraved sentiment. It has its source in the defects of the mind as much as in the vices of the heart. Egoism dries up the germ of all the virtues; individualism at first only dries up the source of the public virtues, but over the long term it attacks and destroys all the others and eventually becomes absorbed in egoism.[288]

The distinction between individualism and egoism is important, because atomistic individualism is not merely something people blindly stumble into, but is born of what Tocqueville argues is "erroneous judgement rather than a depraved sentiment," something which shows how important proper judgment is, and something MacIntyre seeks to overcome through his understanding of traditions of inquiry and the tradition of the virtues.

While many of the component terms regarding postmodernity and conservativism are, I would argue, translatable between MacIntyrean and Habermasian understandings, their underlying assumptions about modernity are certainly opposed to one another. Both recognize the problems with modernity *as it is*. Habermas claims that it is *not modern enough* and that we must complete the incomplete, and somewhat off-track, project.[289] MacIntyre claims that the

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[288] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Stephen D. Grant, (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2000), 204-205, emphasis in original.

[289] Thomas McCarthy, translator's introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, vi, emphasis added. "Habermas tells us that *The Theory of Communicative Action* has three interrelated concerns: (1) to develop a concept of rationality that is no longer tied to, and limited by, the subjectivistic and individualistic premises of

problems we see are *modern problems;* so long as we operate within the framework of

modernity, they will never leave us. Thus we must look elsewhere for means to overcome said

problems: traditions of virtues; questions of human goods; the importance of practical rationality

rightly understood; conceiving of ourselves as inhabitants in particular historically contiguous

traditions of inquiry, etc. Their differences in this regard are what I will now turn to in an

elaboration on their respective understandings of modernity and the Enlightenment.

4.3. Diagnoses of Modernity and the Enlightenment

Habermas and MacIntyre have very different understandings of modernity. Is there a

'right' description or diagnosis of modernity? Is there such a thing as 'multiple modernities'?[290]

It makes sense that Habermas supports the project of modernity, as he sees it as something which

we cannot step outside.[291] Even if it were possible to step outside, Habermas would argue that an

abandonment of the project of modernity would also mean an abandonment of the "200-year-old

counterdiscourse inherent in modernity itself."[292] This implies the horror of 'starting from

scratch,' and is in its own way a Hegelian manner of looking at modernity as the 'end of history,'

but an end which carries with it a continuity, an *Aufheben*-esque continuity, of the substance of

all theses and antitheses therein.

In describing how to overcome some of the problems with Weber's conceptualization of

modernity, Habermas notes that we must assume:

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modern philosophy and social theory; (2) to construct a two-level concept of society that integrates the lifeworld and system paradigms; and, finally, (3) *to sketch out, against this background, a critical theory of modernity which analyzes and accounts for its pathologies in a way that suggests a redirection rather than an abandonment of the project of enlightenment*."

[290] By this what is meant is asking the question of whether 'modernity' is an all-encompassing state of being, inescapable in the manner which Habermas seems to conceive it, or are different understandings of modernity indicative of actually different developments of modern themes which are different enough to be considered separate – yet still modern?

[291] William Outhewaite, *Habermas*, 121.

[292] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 302.

> (p) the emergence of modern, to begin with capitalist, societies required the institutional embodiment and motivational anchoring of postconventional moral and legal representations; but
> (q) capitalist modernization follows a pattern such that cognitive-instrumental rationality surges beyond the bounds of the economy and state into other, communicatively structured areas of life and achieves dominance there at the expense of moral-political and aesthetic-practical rationality; and
> (r) this produces disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld.[293]

In essence Habermas argues that capitalism infects communicative systems and thus poisons the lifeworld. The same could be said from the bureaucratization theme which Habermas picks up from Weber. So for him, the problems of modernity aren't inherent to modernity, but rather to the capitalism, and the parallel administration, born of instrumental reason (at the expense of communicative reason).

Habermas' understanding of the interrelations between lifeworld and system is something which entire books could be written on, as such, any gloss of these theories is necessarily an approximation. Important for noting here on the poisoning of the lifeworld – what Habermas called the colonization of the lifeworld – is that "systemic mecahnisms suppress forms of social integration even in those areas where a consensus-dependent coordination of action cannot be replaced, that is, where the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld is at stake. In these areas, the *mediatization* of the lifeworld assumes the form of a *colonization*."[294] So when the explicit realms of life which allow for the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld become mediatized (through steering media such as money), the lifeworld becomes colonized by the purposive rationality and success-oriented aims that dominate that medium. Habermas goes on to argue that as a lifeworld is increasingly rationalized, it is:

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[293] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 304-05.
[294] Ibid., 196, emphasis in original.

> [B]oth uncoupled from and made dependent upon increasingly complex, formally organized domains of action, like the economy and the state administration. This dependence, resulting from the *mediatization* of the lifeworld by system imperatives, assumes the sociopathological form of an *internal colonization* when critical disequilibria in material reproduction—that is, systemic crises amenable to systems-theoretical analysis—can be avoided only at the cost of disturbances in the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld.[295]

The lifeworld is at risk of beind dominated by systems-theoretic concerns and motivations by way of this colonization.

Bureaucratization simultaneously represents a threat to the lifeworld, in that the tendency toward bureaucratization is:

> [R]epresented from the internal perspective of organizations as a growing *independence* from elements of the lifeworld that has been shoved out into system environments. From the opposite perspective of the lifeworld, the same process presents itself as one of increasing *autonomization*, for areas of action coverted over to communication media and systemically integrated are *withdrawn* from the insitutional orders of the lifeworld. This consitution of action contexts that are no longer socially integrated means that social relations are separated off from the identities of the actors involved.[296]

The process of bureaucratization is of course then seen as a positive thing from the bureaucratic perspective: lifeworld concerns are simply backward and incompatible with contemporary efficiency concerns. But a lifeworld-view sees that the autonomization represented within this bureaucratic trend is just one more step removed from communicative action. By molding its communicative preferences into those of communicative media such as money and power, rather than communicative language uses, bureaucratization has anomic consequences for social actors, as their identity formation – based in lifeworld contexts – is no longer connected to the means and consequences of actions and decision making – now based in the systemic concerns of bureaucracy.

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[295] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 305, emphasis in original.
[296] Ibid., 311, emphasis in original.

Habermas poses the question near the end of *The Theory of Communicative Action,* volume two (1987) of whether we should give upon the Enlightenment project of modernity due to its many problems,[297] including but not limited to the systemically induced reification and cultural impoverishment of communicative infrastructures, the influence of media-steering subsystems,[298] the dehumanization of society,[299] the mediatization and colonization of the lifeworld (as noted above),[300] the death of political participation,[301] or the impact of fragmented consciousnesses.[302] With this it is shown that he is well aware of the negative history that comes with modernity. However he argues that if the areas of life which are necessary for – and simultaneously dependent on – social integration through values, norms, and consensus formation are protected from the "imperatives of economic and administrative subsystems growing with dynamics of their own,"[303] that resistance to this capitalist and administrative menace is possible. This resistance is something Habermas sees as inherent in communicative reason:

> Unlike instrumental reason, communicative reason cannot be subsumed without resistance under a blind self-preservation. It refers neither to a subject that preserves itself in relating to objects via representation and action, not to a self-maintaining system that demarcates itself from an environment, but to a symbolically structured lifeworld that is constituted in the interpretive accomplishments of its members and only reproduced through communication. Thus communicative reason does not simply encounter ready-made subjects and systems; rather, it takes part in structuring what is to be preserved.[304]

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[297] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two,* 326-27.
[298] Ibid., 327.
[299] Ibid., 308.
[300] Ibid., 196, 305, 311-12, 318, 325-327, 330, 355-57, 367-73, 375, 391-96.
[301] Ibid., 350.
[302] Ibid., 355.
[303] Ibid., 372-73.
[304] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 398.

So by trying to draw out the inherent rationality of communicative action in his theory,[305] Habermas is also showing a way to put the project of modernity 'back on course,' so to speak: to recognize the threats to communicative action, by recognizing the context required for it (lifeworld), and the ends towards which it aims (mutual understanding), and to seek to engage in communicative action so as to "take part in structuring what is to be preserved."

MacIntyre on the other hand sees modernity as *inherently* problematic, and seeks to draw on various traditions of inquiry to help find a way out of the problem. Individualism and relativism – two identified problems with postmodernity – are trends he also attaches to modernity.[306] Where Habermas is concerned that the progress made in the last 200 years would be lost if we abandoned modernity, MacIntyre notes that it is not 'we' who are trapped in modernity, but theorists of modernity (such as Habermas):

> Post-Enlightenment relativism and perspectivism are thus the negative counterpart of the Enlightenment, its inverted mirror image. Where the Enlightenment invoked the arguments of Kant or Bentham, such post-Enlightenment theorists invoke Nietzsche's attacks upon Kant and Bentham. It is therefore not surprising that what was invisible to the thinkers of the Enlightenment should be equally invisible to the postmodernist relativists and perspectivists who take themselves to be the enemies of the Enlightenment, while in fact being to a large and unacknowledged degree its heirs. What neither was or is able to recognize is the kind of rationality possessed by traditions.[307]

To be opposed to something is to be connected to it, and MacIntyre argues that the positive or negative obsession with the Enlightenment is still *Enlightenment thinking*. The same would in

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[305] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 397.

[306] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 335. These trends are typified within the tradition of liberalism, a tradition that does not view itself as a tradition; in so doing it attempts to ignore its way out of context so as to – like modernity as conceived of by Habermas – be a concept which encapsulates all remaining history; something which we cannot step outside. MacIntyre argues that in the history of liberalism, which attempted from the start to be an appeal to principles of shared rationality, which could be appealed to by any and all, against the oppression of tradition, "has itself been transformed into a tradition whose continuities are partly defined by the interminability of the debate over such principles. An interminability which was from the standpoint of early liberalism a grave defect to be remedied as soon as possible has become, in the eyes of some liberals at least, a kind of virtue."

[307] Ibid., 353.

theory apply to any obsession: anti-modernists are still *modernists.* In this way, MacIntyre accepts Habermas' claim of being trapped within modernity to a degree. What he allows for – that Habermas does not – is the possibility of accessing *non*-modern traditions to break outside this seemingly 'end-of-history' trap. The tradition of the virtues is something that MacIntyre proposes can help with this escape.

This tradition of the virtues which MacIntyre draws upon and wishes to continue to develop – as well as actually live out – is something he argues is inherently opposed by modern politics and conceptions of justice:

> [T]he tradition of the virtues is at variance with central features of the modern economic order and more especially its individualism, its acquisitiveness, and its elevation of the values of the market to a central social place. It now becomes clear that it also involves a rejection of the modern political order. This does not mean that there are not many tasks only to be performed in and through government which still require performing the rule of law, so far as it is possible in a modern state, has to be vindicated, injustice and unwarranted suffering have to be dealt with, generosity has to be exercised, and liberty has to be defended, in ways that are sometimes only possible through the use of governmental institutions. But each particular task, each particular responsibility, has to be evaluated on its own merits. Modern systematic politics, whether liberal, conservative, radical, or socialist, simply has to be rejected from a standpoint that owes genuine allegiance to the tradition of the virtues; for modern politics itself expresses in its institutional forms a systematic rejection of that tradition. [308]

MacIntyre here is noting the interconnection between the political and economic forces of modernity which he elsewhere also decries: individualism, acquisitiveness, and the elevation of the values of the market to a central social place. He is also admitting to a realism in the form of accepting that a) the world is not from his view perfect, b) we should attempt to make it better, but c) that cannot happen instantly and sometimes we must work with the broken tools of modernity. All politics which are genuinely 'modern' in the above senses however must be

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[308] Alasdair MacIntyre, "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" in *Communitarianism and Individualism,* ed. Shlomo Avineri and Avner de-Shalit, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1992), 64.

rejected. That modernity, regardless of how it brands itself, necessitates playing within the field *preapproved by modernity*. This leads to a sort of modern false dilemma which precludes the consideration of certain perspectives and histories, the very perspectives and histories MacIntyre seeks to draw on.

MacIntyre's focus on the role of community – especially represented through conscious traditions of inquiry, the linguistic, historical, and cultural communities that represent the contexts within which people reason together over questions of human goods and flourishing – is something that sets him against modernity as he has conceived it; an individualistic system with few tools for moving beyond itself, one which we are trapped in:

> MacIntyre's major criticism of modernity has to do with its underlying individualism, the practical failures of that form of individualism, and the social structures and modern philosophies that systematically distort our abilities to comprehend any real alternative to themselves. … However, MacIntyre's proposal has never been for us even to attempt to move back to a premodern, nonindividualist society; he has instead suggested what alternative process would be necessary for a new, nonindividualist society of the future to take shape. If anything, MacIntyre's critique of modernity is better characterized as revolutionary than as reactionary. For MacIntyre, the rupture in human time that modernity represents is therefore to be understood as some kind of *error* that, while marking out fundamentally new possibilities for individual and collective life, unfortunately also diminished human life and must itself be "overcome" in the way it overcame the premodern world it replaced.[309]

MacIntyre seeks to ask and answer normative questions about human goods and conceptions of human flourishing through understandings of practical rationality; the role of language and narrative in the reasoning over human goods, and the role that understanding one's place in history plays in that (all in part represented in his work on traditions of inquiry); and the place the tradition of the virtues plays in achieving those goods. All of these conceptions are not just opposed to modernity, but are simply *not modern*, for they reject the underlying assumptions of

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[309] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 181, emphasis in original.

modernity over questions of goods,[310] how the individual is conceived,[311] the role the market

plays,[312] the ability to reason and what that looks like,[313] the inevitability of progress,[314] etc.[315]

MacIntyre's noting of the important (negative) influence of market values on the social

realm is similar to Habermas' concern about the monetary colonization of the lifeworld. Where

the two disagree however is that Habermas sees the project of modernity as something which – if

completed – can move towards overcoming this; MacIntyre however sees this colonization as

inherent in modernity, and so long as we strive towards/within modernity, we will never undo it.

Further, MacIntyre argues that modernity, in its attempts to create tradition-free

rationality and tradition-free individuals, *necessarily* precludes any substantive ability to resolve

normative disputes:

> [T]he history of attempts to construct a morality for tradition-free individuals,
> whether by an appeal to one out of several conceptions of universalizability or to
> one out of an equally multifarious conceptions of utility or to shared institutions
> or to some combination of these, has … been a history of continuously unresolved
> disputes, so that there emerges no uncontested and incontestable account of what
> tradition-independent morality consists in and consequently not neutral set of

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[310] Namely the equation of goods with conceptions of happiness, utilitarian or otherwise.

[311] Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction,* Second Edition, (Cambridge, UK: MPG Books Group, 2013), 19, 36. The state of nature theorists such as Hobbes and Locke used their understanding of Man in his primitive, pre-social state to paint a picture of the underlying desires which motivate him. These are selfish desires which tend towards isolation – one of the things Hobbes uses to argue for a justification of absolute monarchy in *Leviathan* to hold society together. This theme of a focus on the individual *qua* individual desires is picked up by the utilitarian tradition, as well as David Hume, Adam Smith, Kant, Hegel's understanding of civil society, and even many postmodern thinkers. This theme of individualism has a long history within the tradition of 'modernity.'

[312] Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory,* 16. The work of David Hume equated the fluctuation of prices and volumes of money to the equilibrium of water, and Adam Smith argued that the rich play a useful social role. Hegel also argued that the market played an important social role in the stability of a modern society. All of which points towards a positive orientation towards modern understandings of market roles in society.

[313] Ibid., 15. The model of rationality born of the Enlightenment was one very much parallel with "the principles they understood to have been at work in the seventeenth century foundation of modern physics."

[314] Ibid., 14. "From the start, then, the concept of modernity was indissociably allied to the idea of historical progress."

[315] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 5-20, 86-87. Habermas covers many of these themes as well in these sections of the *Philosophic Discourse*.

criteria by means of which the claims of rival and contending traditions could be adjudicated.[316]

MacIntyre here is giving lie to the Habermasian claim that one cannot step outside modernity: there *are* other traditions, traditions which trace their roots back to premodern beginnings, but which have continued in one manner or another through time, and by their existence continue to deny the claim that modernity is the end of history, or some trap from which it is impossible to escape.

An intersection between Habermas and MacIntyre, which would allow for the easier integration of MacIntyre's understanding of traditions into Habermas' work, is the constancy of human presence within traditions. Just as Habermas claims that you cannot step outside modernity, MacIntyre argues:

> [T]here is no other way to engage in the formulation, elaboration, rational justification, and criticism of accounts of practical rationality and justice except from within some one particular tradition in conversation, cooperation, and conflict with those who inhabit the same tradition. There is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting, and rejecting reasoned argument apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition or another.[317]

In so doing, MacIntyre is claiming that we are always already inhabiting one or more traditions, and that the realization of this can lead to more effective dialogue with other persons. If we reconceptualise the 'always already' of Habermas' modernity to MacIntyre's traditions of inquiry, we can supplant the need for modernity which seems to underlie Habermas' project,[318]

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[316] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 334.

[317] Ibid., 350.

[318] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 7, emphasis in original. "Modernity can and will no longer borrow the criteria by which it take it orientation from the models supplied by another epoch*; it has to create its normativity out of itself*. Modernity see itself cast back upon itself without any possibility of escape." Habermas understands modernity as a necessity which makes it a foundation for his theory.

and in so doing, provide a 'standing ground' from whence critique, rational discourse, and quests

for normativity in the forms of human goods and human flourishing can proceed.

It is clear that there are great differences on the diagnoses of modernity represented in the

works of these two theorists. The ability to 'translate' between them is stymied greatly because

of this. Is it possible to overcome this? MacIntyre argues that there are three stages in the initial

development of a tradition: the first, where the authoritative persons/texts/ideas have not yet been

put in question; the second, where inadequacies have been identified but not yet overcome; and

the third, in which a response to the inadequacies has resulted in a set of "reformulations,

reevaluations, and new formations and evaluations, designed to remedy inadequacies and

overcoming limitations."[319] This development of a tradition is "to be distinguished from that

gradual transformation of beliefs to which every set of beliefs is exposed, both by its systematic

and by its deliberate character."[320] In this way I am identifying problems within Habermas' work

and trying to deliberately overcome them. Habermas is an inhabitant of several intersecting

traditions: a modernist tradition stemming from Enlightenment rationalist thought, a critical

tradition stemming from the Frankfurt School and Marx, and a sociological tradition stemming

from the early founders of the discipline; Durkheim, Weber, Mead, etc. I am trying to overcome

the problems identified in my critiques by exposing Habermas to potential solutions that lie

within a different tradition, an Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition within which MacIntyre operates;

is this possible?

MacIntyre argues that different traditions can intersect and engage one another, and that

this can lead to rational progress within one or all of these traditions. Indeed, this might be

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[319] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 355.
[320] Ibid., 355-56.

obvious from Habermas successfully inhabiting multiple traditions of inquiry already. MacIntyre

argues that it is often from without that resolution to the epistemological crises of this or that

tradition must be resolved, but that to do this there are three requirements:

> First, this in some ways radically new and conceptually enriched scheme, if it is to
> put an end to epistemological crisis, must furnish a solution to the problems which
> had previously proved intractable in a systematic and coherent way. Second, it
> must also provide an explanation of just what it was which rendered the tradition,
> before it had acquired these new resources, sterile or incoherent or both. And
> third, these first two tasks must be carried out in a way which exhibits some
> fundamental continuity of the new conceptual and theoretical structures with the
> shared beliefs in terms of which the tradition of enquiry had been defined up to
> this point.[321]

This is what I have been trying to do in the course of this work: identify what might be classified

as an epistemological crisis within the theory of Habermas,[322] and integrate sufficiently new

conceptual structures which are not so radically different that they preclude the continuation of

the tradition(s) which Habermas inhabits.

It must be by a tradition's own standards that another tradition provides the means of

overcoming an epistemological crisis,[323] which is why I have made such an effort to show that in

many regards there is a translatability between the ideas and criteria used by both Habermas and

MacIntyre. That is not to say that there must be agreement on everything – they would not be

separate traditions if that were the case, and would not be able to provide resources for the

resolution of epistemological crises. But if two traditions can understand each other sufficiently,

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[321] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 362.
[322] Habermas gets stuck in an internalized process of language use which, understood as its own end, cannot be used to judge the goodness or badness of things in a normative sense, nor give an account of the good. In so being stuck, he is prevented from achieving the end he sets himself to from within his own theory (or tradition) and comes to an epistemological crisis which I argue is only able to be overcome through exposure to, and dialogue with, somewhat alien traditions in the form of MacIntyre's work and its influences.
[323] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 364.

there has to be the possibility of reconciliation of the understandings of rationality of each.[324] It

is with hope for this reconciliation that I have undertaken to bring Habermas and MacIntyre into

such a dialogue, and it is to a conclusion of this dialogue that I will shortly turn.

4.4. Understandings of 'Background Context'

Habermas and MacIntyre both have a conception of a form of prereflective, implicit

context within which all conscious, purposeful activity takes place. This 'background' in each

case serves the purpose of situating individual agents within a social and historical context.

Before any final argument for whether MacIntyre's understanding of traditions can be usefully

brought together with Habermas' social theory, a comparison between their respective

understandings of 'background context' must be made.

For Habermas, the concept that fills this role is of course that of *lifeworld,* which has

already been discussed at length, and which has its own inner logic which it intermeshed with the

pretheoretical knowledge of its members.[325] For MacIntyre, it is a 'prereflective background'

which is – as Terry Pinkard notes - a:

> [S]hared form of life … necessary to orient people; in living out one's life, one is
> oriented to taken-for-granted notions of the goods of that form of life – what we
> have called the "moral reality" … - that in turn structure one's practical reasoning
> as a kind of skill, a know-how in making one's way around that life. … we always
> simply "find" ourselves in a historical community for whom some things simply
> "are", at least from our point of view on them, goods.[326]

Language always pre-exists the individual who uses it, which helps situate them within an

already existing historical and social context. This focus on language is interesting because of its

connection to Habermas' interest in communication and the language use therein.

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[324] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 370.
[325] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 153.
[326] Terry Pinkard, "MacIntyre's Critique of Modernity," 192.

This connection regarding an already existing social, linguistic, and historical context is important because it is specifically this that makes up part of one of my critiques. Habermas' lifeworld is a useful tool for the understanding of his theory, but there are implications that aren't clearly explained by Habermas. How accessible is it? Is it a totally inaccessible thing, never to be impacted in any way by its 'inhabitants'? I think this would be unfair to say of Habermas. It is clear in his work that lifeworld impacts and *is impacted by* communicative action directed towards mutual understanding.[327] But whether this impact is one in which the inhabitants of a given lifeworld can consciously, and explicitly engage with understanding the contents of their lifeworld is another question. One which Habermas does not directly answer. From my reading of Habermas and those who write of him, it would seem that lifeworld – as understood by Habermas - is impacted by its inhabitants in a reciprocal manner, and in a manner typified by language use in the form of communicative action, but it does not seem to be the case that those language users can use communicative action to *consciously* and actively engage with their own lifeworld:

> [T]he lifeworld is represented as a "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns." In the form of "language" and "culture" this reservoir of implicit knowledge supplies actors with unproblematic background convictions upon which they draw in the negotiation of common definitions of situations. Individuals cannot "step out" of their lifeworlds; nor can they objectify them in a supreme act of reflection. [328]

Here we see Thomas McCarthy's take on Habermas' lifeworld, and how it both constrains and enables the individual actor within any social context. Importantly, we also see how lifeworld

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[327] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 342-43.
[328] Thomas McCarthy, translator's introduction to *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, xxiv. "[T]he lifeworld is represented as a "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns." In the form of "language" and "culture" this reservoir of implicit knowledge supplies actors with unproblematic background convictions upon which they draw in the negotiation of common definitions of situations. Individuals cannot "step out" of their lifeworlds; nor can they objectify them in a supreme act of reflection."

cannot be objectified in any act of reflection, or in other words, it cannot be made the object of

reason – it cannot be explicitly reasoned over or with, precluding any active engagement with a

properly functioning lifeworld.

To expand on the difference between what Habermas considers a *properly functioning*

lifeworld, and an *endangered portion* of a lifeworld it is worth quoting again Habermas'

description of lifeworld and its relation to conscious communicative action from the end of

second volume of *The Theory of Communicative Action* to show some differences from

McCarthy's summary:

> The mode of preunderstanding or of intuitive knowledge of the lifeworld from within which we live together, act and speak with one another, stands in peculiar contrast, as we have seen, to the explicit knowledge of something. The horizontal knowledge that communicative everyday practice *tacitly* carries with it is paradigmatic for the *certainty* with which the lifeworld background is present; yet it does not satisfy the criterion of knowledge that stands in internal relation to validity claims and can therefore be criticized. That which stands beyond all doubt seems as if it could never become problematic; as what is simply unproblematic, a lifeworld can at most fall apart. It is only under the pressure of approaching problems that relevant components of such background knowledge are torn out of their unquestioned familiarity and brought to consciousness as something in need of being ascertained. It takes an earthquake to make us aware that we had regarded the ground on which we stand everyday as unshakable.[329]

From this we see that Habermas conceives of lifeworld as something which we are only

conscious of when it has already failed in a sense. The undermining of lifeworld assumptions

necessarily leads to the *endangerment* of that part of the lifeworld. It is only in endangerment

that component parts of a given lifeworld become explicit and intelligible. Habermas here

importantly notes that it *is* possible to becoming conscious of aspects of the lifeworld, but only in

crises – not in the standard condition of this or that lifeworld.

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[329] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 400, emphasis in original.

The understanding of lifeworld as only consciously intelligible when in crisis is problematic because it puts entire areas of life outside the realm of intelligibility, which undermines any quest for human rationality within communicative action. If we accept the unintelligibility of *x* or *y* component of life, we undermine our claims to the intelligibility of those areas of life we claim rational understanding of. The parts of human life which the lifeworld is trying to represent are either rationally intelligible, or they are not. Even the most complex series of social interactions and catalysts, leading to the most complex outcomes, are *in theory* rationally intelligible – it might just be so complex that no one person might be able to account for all the component parts. *But its structure is still rationally intelligible*, even if it is *not rationally understood* at a given time. This is an area which MacIntyre is not only connected, but in which he might offer assistance.

MacIntyre's parallel background understanding to Habermas' lifeworld is one which he claims is mostly in said background, un-thought-of and unaccounted for. However it is something which MacIntyre believes *can* be consciously engaged with, and not just in situations where we are seeing the explicit fallout of an implicit failure, in the manner of Habermas' description of lifeworld. This engagement is only possible by way of dialogue with other persons, so that one can be made aware of a third-person perspective, and avoid being trapped within the first-person, according to MacIntyre.[330] This necessity of the other in the reasoning also precludes any description of MacIntyre's understanding of a background context as being what McCarthy called a "supreme act of reflection" in a manner which might be critically aimed at students of some philosophic hermeneutics such as Hans-Georg Gadamer.[331] MacIntyre argues

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[330] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 312-13.
[331] The connection between Gadamer, MacIntyre, and Habermas will be discussed in the upcoming excurses.

that it is one of the major roles of social theory to help make explicit the implicit in the social world.[332] Habermas has a *theory* about lifeworld, which precludes the explicit description of what others take as implicit, at least insofar as that lifeworld is in good order. In so conceiving of lifeworld, it might be argued that lifeworld – as Habermas conceives it – could be aided by more of a MacIntyrean influence to open it up to rational analysis and engagement, at least potentially.

MacIntyre's concept of a prereflective background also differs from Habermas' theory of lifeworld in regards to ideas of *purpose* and *cause*. These two concepts are importantly divided in regards to human rationality because *purposes* are intentional and thus rational, whereas *causes* are unintentional and thus non-rational.[333] Habermas seems reluctant to allow for the rational engagement with *functioning* lifeworlds, not just the *idea* of lifeworld. However, Habermas also argues that lifeworld can influence intentionality in persons, indeed, his conception of intentionality *requires* this background of lifeworld to explain action in his theory. This dissonance seems to be something MacIntyre can help address. MacIntyre on the other hand conceptualizes the prereflective background as something which can be rationally engaged with, which necessarily means that it is, or at least can be, purposive, in that it influences the rational choices of persons, who in turn can – through engagement with others –investigate and influence that prereflective background.

There is another reason why lifeworld – as conceptualized by Habermas – is so important to his theory: Habermas argued that when engaging in communication about criticizable validity claims towards the end of mutual understanding and subsequent coordination of action, the

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[332] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 111.
[333] Stephen P. Turner, "MacIntyre and the Philosophy of the Social Sciences," in *MacIntyre,* ed. Mark C. Murphy, (New York, NY: University of Cambridge Press, 2003), 72.

whole process would be impossible without some kind of uncriticizable ground to stand upon.[334] Failing this, all rational communication would collapse in an endless cycle of criticism. If MacIntyre is to help resolve this conflict over lifeworld without collapsing Habermas' whole theory of communicative action, he will have to show that that theory of communicative action can survive without a *completely* uncriticizable ground which Habermas claims is essential to communicative action. This is something I believe he does: MacIntyre never claims that at any time 100% of the prereflective background knowledge will be actively the subject of rational critique and investigation. He only modestly claims that such investigation is indeed possible. This is a concession which I argue still allows MacIntyre to help with this aspect of Habermas' work, without requiring a complete rewrite of his theory, as it leaves space for an as-of-yet-uncriticizable background to support communicative action, but with the acknowledgement of the potential for areas and aspects of that background to become consciously accessible whilst simultaneously maintaining their function.

So are Habermas' lifeworld, and MacIntyre's prereflective background, translatable concepts? They are different enough that they certainly wouldn't fall into the category of 'same-saying' translation, matching word for word. But they also aren't entirely untranslatable. I posit that they would fall under the category of *translation by linguistic innovation*. As the subject investigating, I would say that my 'primary language' in this case is MacIntyre, with Habermas being the 'language of less experience.' I am educated in each 'language' enough that I realize Habermas' lifeworld and MacIntyre's conception of a prereflective background aren't directly translatable. However, I argue I am also educated in each 'language' enough to make the claim

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[334] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 400.

that they are similar enough concepts that MacIntyre's concept might offer help for the problems of Habermas' lifeworld (as noted in my 2nd critique).

This 'translation' of Habermas to MacIntyre and back is not to argue that lifeworld necessarily must be done away with – as it plays an important role in Habermas' theory – but rather that it should be innovated (in the manner of our translation type) in such a way that it becomes more aligned with MacIntyre's prereflective background. If innovated thusly, it could help overcome the problems of vagueness of specificity, historicity, narrative wholeness, and whether it influences purposive intention or merely causes things in the world.

Without conducting a primary study, the best that can be done at this point to demonstrate this would be an example. A person is a member of a community. They spend most of their time surrounded by this community, engaging with this community, and conceptualizing themselves as members of this community. This community helps contribute to the lifeworld of this individual, and other members of the community. Habermas might argue that the things this person takes as unproblematic assumptions: that their family is there, that their friends care, that there will be food of a particular type in the grocery store down the corner, that if they wave at the lady down the street gardening she will wave back – all of these are assumptions of the lifeworld. Habermas would argue that it is only when parts of the lifeworld become endangered and damaged that they come into the foreground. A death in the family, a betrayal by a friend, a famine killing a particular crop, or a neighbour moving away. All of these things bring us face-to-face with our underlying assumptions. It is our guts sinking, our kneejerk reactions, our unspecific sadness or anger, which slowly allows us to come to consciously considering "what was it about that family member/friend/food/neighbour that I am missing?"

Once aware of their previously implicit assumptions which these unsettling instances have made explicit however, the individual can only do so much to sink back into the lifeworld realm regarding their family, friends, and what have you. They will henceforth fear for future deaths in the family, be on the lookout for backstabbing friends, and perhaps even hoard their favourite confection. It is surely the case that these paranoias ease with time, but it would be hard to argue that once aware, anyone ever again becomes fully unaware.

MacIntyre however would argue that this is a process which our prereflective background undergoes naturally – as in the examples given – but also one which can happen through rational engagement with others. We ask our surviving mother several years after the death of our father "why do I still feel empty? Why do I still feel scared?" In speaking with them, we investigate our feelings not just in regards to our deceased father, but also to our assumptions about our family as a whole, and our place therein. These are more or less explicit depending on the persons engaged in communication, but they have the potential to be *incredibly* explicit given the right partner in discourse. This is not a thing which undermines the background upon which one relies for communication for MacIntyre. It simply expands our understanding and the realm which we can discuss subjects in, the 'horizon of possibility' for knowing, as Gadamer would say. If anything, it merely exposes yet more newly barely tangible fringes of knowledge, and the as-yet-unknown areas beyond these fringes, ensuring that the rational accessibility of the lifeworld doesn't not necessitate its dissolution.[335]

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[335] Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle,* ed. Richard McKeon, trans. C.D.C. Reeve, (New York, NY: The Random House Publishing Company, 2001), 91, 110, 595. Michael E. Marmura, "Avicenna on Meno's Paradox: On "Apprehending" Unknown Things Through Known Things," *Mediaeval Studies,* 71 (2009): 47-48. The influence from Aristotle here in MacIntyre is clear: the range of what one knows one knows leads to an even wider range of things which one is now conscious of not knowing. This is evident from the opening statement of the *Posterior Analytics* that "All instruction given or received by way of argument proceeds from pre-existing knowledge." (i. 10. 71a 1-2), as well being as hinted at in the *Prior Analytics* (xxix. 1. 46a 18-22), and *On the Soul* (xii. 3. 431a 24-30,

4.4.1. Excurses on Gadamer

One major hurdle which must be overcome if MacIntyre's understanding of tradition is to be brought together with Habermas' understanding of lifeworld relates to Habermas' critiques of Gadamer. Habermas says of Gadamer that his theory of philosophic hermeneutics 'anticipates completeness,' in that the "interpreter has to assume that the transmitted text, notwithstanding its initial inaccessibility for him, represents a reasonable expression, one that could be grounded under certain presuppositions."[336] A claim which sounds similar to MacIntyre's claims about encountering and engaging with alien traditions of inquiry. Gadamer argues that to overcome the incomprehensibility of a given text one must seek to reach a 'fusion of horizons,' wherein the horizon of possibility for the reader intermeshes with that of the text.[337] This also sounds not unlike MacIntyre's claims about the intermingling and interacting of traditions of inquiry. What then is the problem?

Gadamer gives the "interpretive model of *Verstehen* a peculiarly *one-sided twist*."[338] Habermas argues that:

> If in the performative attitude of virtual participants in conversation we start with the idea that an author's utterance has the presumption of rationality, we not only admit the possibility that the interpretandum may be exemplary *for us*, that we may learn something from it; we also take into account the possibility that the author could learn *from us*. Gadamer remains bound to the experience of the philologist who deals with classical [texts] … The knowledge embodied in the text is, Gadamer believes, fundamentally superior to the interpreter's.[339]

432a 1-2, 6-10). It is also a theme picked up by Avicenna and other Middle Eastern philosophers' building on Aristotle's and Plato's understanding of knowledge, the things we can come to know, and how we can come to know them.

[336] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 133.
[337] Ibid., 134.
[338] Ibid., 134, emphasis in original.
[339] Ibid., 134, emphasis in original.

Habermas' criticism of Gadamer then is that his approach to understanding is intertwined so heavily with *the tradition of textual analysis which he inhabits,* that it is a unidirectional manner of understanding. Assuming that the knowledge embodied in the text is *fundamentally* superior to the reader's, because it has stood the test of time, leads to what Habermas argues is Gadamer's obsession with the dogmatic interpretation of sacred scriptures.[340]

How does this relate to MacIntyre's claims about tradition? MacIntyre also is concerned with central texts (especially in the role they play in founding traditions of inquiry).[341] But central or sacred texts for MacIntyre do not represent some automatically unassailable font of eternal knowledge in the manner that Habermas would argue Gadamer sees them. Indeed, central texts are often critiqued, reinterpreted, and even discarded during the process of maturation within a tradition.[342] MacIntyre is also interested in how an 'interpreter' from within one tradition may analyze and view the goings on within another tradition, but by virtue of that other tradition of inquiry not being some inanimate text but rather a living tradition kept alive by other 'interpreters,' he leaves open the possibility of 'mutual interpretation,' or the 'learning from us' Habermas speaks of:

> It does not follow that what is said from within one tradition cannot be heard or overhead by those in another. Traditions which differ in the most radical way over certain subject matters may in respect of others share beliefs, images, and texts. Considerations urged from within one tradition may be ignored by those conducting enquiry or debate within another only at the cost, by their own standards, of excluding relevant good reasons for believing or disbelieving this or that or for acting one way rather than another. Yet in other areas what is asserted or enquired into within the former tradition may have no counterpart whatsoever in the latter. And in those areas where there are subject matters or issues in common to one or more tradition, one such tradition may frame its theses by means of concepts such that the falsity of theses upheld within one or more other

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[340] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 135.
[341] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 355.
[342] Ibid., 355.

> traditions is entailed, yet at the same time no or insufficient common standards are available by which to judge between rival standpoints. Logical incompatibility *and* incommensurability may both be present.[343]

Here we can see that MacIntyre allows for the possibility of incompatibility and/or incommensurability, in which case there might be instances where a more Gadamerian, one-way approach to understanding might make sense. But in most cases there is the potential for a mutual interpenetration of traditions and their inhabitants in terms of their discourses and the knowledge they access.

4.5. Lifeworld or Tradition: Can MacIntyre really help Habermas' project?

We have looked at both lifeworld and at tradition. I argue that traditions as MacIntyre understand them represent the somewhat-more-tangible manifestation of the prereflective background which runs parallel to Habermas' understanding of lifeworld. I posit that understanding Habermas' theories through the lens of 'traditions of inquiry' and traditions more generally as historicizing, narrative concepts would help to overcome some of the problems I have identified with Habermas' understanding of lifeworld. This is not an undue recommendation because of the similarities – the 'translatability' – between Habermas' understandings of the role of lifeworld, and how lifeworlds interact and MacIntyre's parallel understanding of traditions of inquiry, as well as their many other intersections. Habermas notes that different lifeworlds can interact and work out their differences, even to the point of fusing,[344] which is quite similar to potential interactions between traditions of inquiry which MacIntyre has argued. Habermas has also argued that language helps to anchor the lifeworld to "bodily

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[343] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 350, emphasis in original.
[344] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 359.

centers,"[345] which is similar to MacIntyre's claims that language is a tool of tradition, and that

traditions can be understood linguistically. Habermas already understands that theoretic

paradigms lose force when negated by a different paradigm,[346] which parallels MacIntyre's

understanding of different traditions overcoming one another. Habermas also raises the concern

about postmodernity wherein two opposed paradigms can critique one another to no end, with

neither one submitting[347] – a concern MacIntyre has designed his theories of tradition to address.

Habermas also worries about the "kaleidoscope" of totalities of discourse represented within

postmodern thought, as opposed to overarching meaning or dialectical progress of any kind,[348]

another thing which MacIntyre's non-deterministic understanding of rational progress within and

between traditions aims at addressing. Habermas acknowledges the Enlightenment as a tradition

(albeit not necessarily in the same manner as MacIntyre might use that term) which understands

enlightened thinking as oppositional to myth: "As *opposition*, because it opposes the unforced

force of the better argument to the authoritarian normativity of a tradition interlinked with the

chain of the generations."[349] MacIntyre conceives of traditions as not an 'authoritarian

normativity,' but more as an 'authoritative normativity,' susceptible to that same 'unforced force

of the better argument' that Habermas understands modernity to ideally be driven by.

Habermas is concerned that "if thinking can no longer operate in the element of truth, or

of validity claims in general, contradiction and criticism lose their meaning."[350] MacIntyre shows

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[345] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity*, 359.

[346] Ibid., 310.

[347] Ibid., 96-97. Nietzsche's enthroning of taste, the "Yes and the No of the palate," as something beyond true and false and good and evil is seen by Habermas as a prototypically postmodern problem, which would prevent any engagement based on understandings of right/wrong, true/false, or validity claims of any kind, necessary for any kind of progressive dialogue.

[348] Ibid., 253.

[349] Ibid., 107, emphasis in original.

[350] Ibid., 124.

how through the history of traditions of inquiry, despite different understandings of validity or truth requirements, criticism can still have (productive) meaning in the history of this or that, or between this or that, tradition. Habermas notes that "communicative utterances are always embedded in various world relations at the same time. Communicative action relies on a cooperative process of interpretation in which participants relate simultaneously to something in the objective, social and the subjective worlds,"[351] and MacIntyre's understanding of the prereflective background which is always already present within a tradition allows for this very embeddedness within one or more traditions. Habermas already acknowledges that "[t]he reproduction of the lifeworld consists essentially in in a continuation and renewal of tradition, which moves between the extremes of a mere reduplication of and a break with tradition."[352] Indeed, Habermas argues that communicative action not only allows us to come to agreement, but also to help confirm and renew our membership in groups and our own identity.[353] This reproduction of something serving the same background purpose that lifeworld holds within Habermas' theory and renewal of self-understanding is readily available within MacIntyre's understanding of tradition.

Habermas' critiques of analytic action theory are shared by MacIntyre, and accounted for by his work on traditions of inquiry.[354] Even Habermas' work, *The Philosophic Discourse of Modernity* (1987) reads as an account of the tradition which has developed into 'the tradition of modernity,' which he claims we are trapped in. If this embeddedness in tradition is made

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[351] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume Two*, 120.
[352] Ibid., 139.
[353] Ibid., 139.
[354] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Volume One*, 273-74. Analytic action theory is "limited to the atomistic model of action by an isolated actor and does not consider the mechanisms for coordinating action through which interpersonal relations come about."

explicit, it would be much easier to theoretically step outside that tradition – or at least acknowledge that possibility through the aid of *other* such traditions.

With all of the intersections between MacIntyre and Habermas, it would seem that the main stumbling block between the two in terms of any kind of integration of theory would be their understandings of modernity. As has already been discussed, their disagreements are many, and fundamental. Lifeworld however, as Habermas understands it, is essentially an idea that *is human*, in that so long as there are, have been, or will be, people, there will continue to be an associated lifeworld. Lifeworld then is not inherently *modern*. Indeed, Habermas' many concerns about the colonization of the lifeworld by various steering media such as money are *modern concerns*, insofar as they are phenomena endemic to the happenings of modernity: capitalism, bureaucratization, etc. Because of this – because lifeworld isn't *inherently* attached to the modernity which Habermas is so concerned with – it seems reasonable to argue that one could disagree with Habermas' diagnosis of modernity, but still offer progressive critique in the realm of lifeworld; something I am arguing MacIntyre can do.

Is it such a logical leap then to connect a non-modern conception such as MacIntyre's traditions of inquiry, and the prereflective background conception that goes along with it, to another non-modern conception in the form of Habermas' lifeworld? I think not. The real concern would be this: what then does this mean for the direction of Habermas' theory? If it is indeed possible to bring MacIntyre and Habermas together in this way, will it mean making Habermas more like MacIntyre in terms of ends, or vice versa? One could adapt the MacIntyrean idea of traditions of inquiry and – excluding his ideas of human goods, human flourishing, and the role of the human virtues in their achievement – still have a Habermasian end product: the salvaging of modernity, understood as a tradition of inquiry. Salvaged, perhaps, due to its new

ability to engage with and take seriously non-modern (not merely anti-modern, i.e., postmodern, and post-postmodern) solutions to identified problems.

This is a possibility, but not one which I would argue for – although it certainly would make for a 'better Habermas' in regards to the overall workability of his theory of lifeworld, but not help him escape the is-ought dilemma that is the subject of my first critique. I would argue instead for a more MacIntyrean Habermas, one who takes seriously considerations of human goods and human flourishing. This is not an advisement for the pursuit of a singular, particular, achievable Good. MacIntyre himself recognizes that this is a fantasy of sorts.[355] This is rather a desire for a striving towards a better, more sufficient and encompassing understanding of human normativity; not merely how people have or do seek it, but how people ought to seek it, for their own betterment.

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[355] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 315. "To live well is to act so as to move toward achieving the best goods of which one is capable and so as to become the kind of agent capable of achieving those goods. But there is no particular finite good the achievement of which perfects and completes one's life. There is always something else and something more to be attained, whatever one's attainments. The perfection and completion of a life consists in an agent's having persisted in moving toward and beyond the best goods of which she or he knows. So there is presupposed some further good, an object of desire beyond all particular and finite goods, a good ward which desire tends insofar as it remains unsatisfied by even the more desirable of finite goods, as in good lives it does."

5. Conclusion

It should be clear now that the solution to the identified problems with Habermas'
theories is not represented in the form of a single tweak here, a rephrasing there, or an extra
citation or two. The suggestions herein are broad and are meant to represent the beginning of
what will hopefully be an *ongoing* dialogue between not just the works of Jürgen Habermas and
Alasdair MacIntyre, but between sociologists and philosophers more broadly. This dialogue
should not be inconceiveable, given that Habermas is as much a philosopher as a sociologist,
who has shown himself more than willing to engage with critics, and MacIntyre is constantly
referring to the sociological concerns and impacts of his work, and the impacts of sociological
work on his own.

Sociologists have long known that whenever we go into the social world in search of
answers, we bring ourselves with us. We can try to distance ourselves from our work for a
variety of reasons – and indeed this is sometimes advisable – but we, as the investigators, are
always still tethered to that which we investigate. MacIntyre is well aware of this:

> [T]here is no other way to engage in the formulation, elaboration, rational
> justification, and criticism of accounts of practical rationality, rational
> justification, and criticism of [such] accounts … except from within some one
> particular tradition in conversation, cooperation, and conflict with those who
> inhabit the same tradition. There is no standing ground, no place for enquiry, no
> way to engage in the practices of advancing, evaluating, accepting, and rejecting
> reasned argument *apart from that which is provided by some particular tradition
> or other*.[356]

If we conceive of sociology as one such tradition, or perhaps different theoretic trends within
sociology as such traditions, the repeatedly asked question about why there is so much conflict
within the discipline regarding theory, methodology, and ideas of the place sociology should

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[356] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame, Indiana: Notre Dame University Press, 2008), 350, emphasis added.

hold in relation to the society it claims to study, may be framed in such a manner as to better aim at resolving some of these conflicts. An improved conception of sociology might be as a discipline which represents the *ongoing intersection of various nascent traditions*, still in the process of solidifying into any kind of unified tradition, or perhaps as suggested above, as representing *distinct traditions in their own right*. This is not counter to MacIntyre's understanding of the developing of traditions – they do not happen overnight. This also represents an advantage to sociologists: we more freely have the ability to engage with other traditions, and draw from them questions, and potential answers to a range of problematics, without the free-range or engagement being (implicitly) attributed to indistinct and poorly defined ideas of sociology's 'openness.'

5.1. Sociology as a Normative Exercise

If sociology is conceived as a developing tradition or traditions, the question must be asked of what relation that/those tradition(s) should have to questions of normativity. Should it merely be a descriptive tradition of inquiry, concerned with how things *are* (or perhaps, are *seen to be*)? Leaving considerations or actual engagement with producing normative answers to normative questions to other traditions, perhaps more philosophically minded ones? If this is to be the case, then what tools of critique do sociologists possess other than historical, third person critique? In the form of 'such and such group of persons did x thing in the past, but not do y thing, and by their own standards of rationality, y is the better thing.' Or 'such and such group did x thing, and such and such other group rejected it.' Such a limited range of critique is already visible within the work of some of the more hard-relativist social scientists, especially within sociology and anthropology. MacIntyre shows that a 'traditions of inquiry' framework allows for the mediation between different traditions' standards of rationality, and opens the door for

intertraditional critique in a more nuanced manner than merely slapping different groups together and seeing what shakes out.

The importance of critique is precisely this: we live in a world where bad things happen. Sometimes very bad things. If we are unable to resist and reject them in the course of investigating them, then our investigations become inane, or even complicit, accounts of that badness. We *ought* to call out the badness of the world, as a precurser to any kind of progression towards goodness. The specifics of what are defined as which are not of importance here, only that MacIntyre gives us the tools to ask those questions, as well as the normative drive to *seek to answer them.*

I propose then that sociology be (re)conceived as a normative exercise in human rationality in the manner of MacIntyre's conception of traditions of inquiry. In so doing, I argue that sociology can move towards a positive normative '*ought,*' in a refreshing change from the negative '*ought not'* extant in much of Marxian sociology. Sociology can, and I argue *should*, be aided in this exercise by a direct and explicit engagement with philosophy.

5.2. The Role Philosophy Should Play in Sociological Inquiry

If sociology is understood as an intersection of traditions, a tradition itself still in the making, then as noted above it has easier access to a range of influences from various traditions of inquiry. Many of those traditions are more philosophically-minded. It is a continual struggle within the social sciences to demarcate theory from practice. In a similar way, the question must be asked: should sociology be more philosophical, or should philosophy be more sociological? I believe the answer to each of these questions is 'both.' Insofar as theory isolates itself from practice, it does not pursue the good in any tangible manner. Insofar as practice rejects theory, it cannot conceive of, and reason between, different human goods sufficient to pursue them

adequately. With the mutual intertwining of both, sociology – conceived of as a tradition – can prevent the problems associated with traditions of inquiry which *do not recognize themselves as traditions*.[357]

If we look at the history of sociology, and the theorists who have influences the founding canon: Marx, Durkheim, Weber – as well as the latter theorists: Foucault, Mead, Parsons, Bourdieu – many of them were themselves philosophers (and economists, and anthropologists, etc.). Sociology is already well-placed for the engagement with philosophers, as well as engagement with the existing social world. I propose an ongoing dialogue between a range of sociological thinkers, over a range of sociological issues, with philosophers who ponder over similar issues. The 'sociologist on the ground' must engage with questions of 'why' this or that is happening, and should be not just willing and able, but *encouraged* to draw upon philosophic reasources to the end of answering their questions. Likewise, they should be encouraged to explicitly draw upon similar resources in developing normative questions and critiques, and in developing the direction of their research and indeed, their lives.

5.3. Future Questions?

As noted at the end of the discussion chapter, I am arguing for a more MacIntyrean Habermas in more ways than one. Going forward, how would this impact future theoretical and sociological work? Conceptualizing ongoing social interactions and beliefs through a MacIntyrean lens would help Habermas not just speculate about ideal speech conditions necessary for communicative action, but help him understand how people are in their day to day lives striving, or failing to strive, to overcome the hurdles preventing such ideal speech

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[357] See MacIntyre's comments on Liberalism as a tradition in chapter XVII of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988).

conditions. Taking a traditions-theoretic approach would aid in all manner of sociological research in both descriptive and normative ways, and future investigation could include the application of such an approach to specific social problems/areas of interest.

Future dialogue between sociologists and philosophers could include a wide range of names and ideas. Having laid the foundations for a traditions-theoretic approach within sociology, future work could take up this task with all sorts of normative and descriptive philosophers.

The other side of future investigations could be a sociologizing of philosophers. Investigating their social circumstances; the connection between their beliefs and ideas, and their social action; what social and theoretic preconditions seem necessary for philosophers to act on their ideas, rather than merely theorizing; indeed, even the investigation of how philosophers conceive of themselves in relation to other philosophers versus how they conceive of themselves in relation to non-philosophers. The range of possible areas of investigation is indeed massive.[358]

Due to time and size constraints, many of the influences on Habermas and MacIntyre, as well as parallel theorists, could not be included in any substantive way. Future engagements with the works of Gadamer is a possibility. The short excuses on Gadamer herein easily represents an ingress to engagement with the tradition of philosophic hermeneutics and Gadamer's impact on the philosophy of the social sciences. One area not explicitly engaged with in this thesis, which future work could make a more concerted effort to draw out, is the differences in approaches to

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[358] Randall Collins has done work in this area which could serve as inspiration for any such future "sociology of philosophy" style investigations. See Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies: A Global Theory of Intellectual Change,* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

metaphysics represented in the works of Habermas and MacIntyre.[359] Future discourse between MacIntyre and other ideas is also possible; he is highly critical of liberalism, but bringing MacIntyre into dialogue with contemporary liberal virtue ethicists, and expressivists about morality are potentially interesting areas of exploration.

The most important question going forward however is likely: what will the impact – if any – of my proposal here be? Will we see any change in the way sociological theory is undertaken, especially Habermasian-influenced theory? Will the explicit normative implications of MacIntyre's work be taken up by critical sociologists, especially Marxian and Feminist sociologists, who tend to incorporate questions of normativity into their work? Or will the tradition-theoretic lens which I am proposing be too much to swallow, despite my defences of it? For these questions, only time will tell. But with time will also come opportunity for new questions, and new engagements with many and varied traditions of inquiry. Traditions which I for one will take seriously as sociologically valuable tools for analysis.

Explicit hic totum qui scripsit da sibi potum.

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[359] This was mostly due to time and size constraints, coupled with the fact that MacIntyre's metaphysical groundings aren't made as explicit as Habermas' rejection of metaphysics is, and would require much work to explicate.

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