

GOD'S JUSTICE? RIGHT REASON?
JUSTICE AND RATIONALITY IN CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING
IN THE LIGHT OF ALASDAIR MACINTRYE'S CONCEPTION
OF TRADITIONS OF ENQUIRY

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Few contemporary philosophical works on justice have been as broadly discussed as MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*¹ (*WJWR*). In this work the author does not present another theory of justice but rather discusses how such theories emerge, interact, progress and decline. A key concept deployed in the discussion is that of "traditions of enquiry".² The core of MacIntyre's position, it will be argued here, is that any substantial theory of justice is necessarily articulated within a tradition of enquiry in a form of rationality which derives in part from the institutional structures of that tradition. In this sense, justice and rationality are conceived of in correlative terms and as inherently tied to given institutional structures.

All of this has been the subject of discussion among philosophers and others since this work was first published (1988).³ Less attention has been paid to the implications of this line of thought for moral theology in general and for Catholic Social Teaching (CST) in particular. One interesting question that arises is whether CST itself is such a "tradition of enquiry" and, if so, what is the relationship between justice and rationality within this tradition? The purpose of this essay is to explore this question.

The structure of the piece will consequently be the following: first, define as carefully as possible what precisely MacIntyre means by a tradition of enquiry; second, consider to what extent CST constitutes a tradition of enquiry taking *Gaudium et spes* as a "case in point"; third, consider, with regard to the relationship between justice and rationality, the challenge posed by MacIntyre to the self-understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and indeed to (moral) theology in general. It will be suggested by way of conclusion that this challenge might be suggestively, if cryptically, expressed in the juxtaposition *God's Justice? Right Reason?*

I. MacIntyre's conception of "traditions of enquiry"

What, then, does MacIntyre mean when he speaks of "traditions of enquiry"? In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* the author offers a number of explanatory, almost definitional, statements on this matter, but he also insists⁴ that what it means can only be fully understood through the actual exemplifications thereof which he presents in the course of the study. For this reason it would seem best to take note of one such explanatory statement and then attempt to articulate a more comprehensive understanding of the term in the light of the work as a whole.

Perhaps the most complete single statement of what MacIntyre means by a tradition of enquiry is the following: "A tradition is an argument extended through time in which certain fundamental agreements are defined and redefined in terms of two kinds of conflict: those with critics and enemies external to the tradition who reject all or at least key parts of those fundamental agreements, and those internal, interpretative debates through which the meaning and rationale of

the fundamental agreements come to be expressed and by whose progress a tradition is constituted.”⁵

Having offered this initial explanation, MacIntyre proceeds to narrate at some length and in some depth three major traditions of enquiry (Aristotelian, Augustinian and Thomistic) and to advert to the emergence of a new tradition (liberalism). I wish to propose the following schema as an elucidation of the initial explanation quoted above in the light of a careful reading of the whole work:

A tradition of enquiry involves the systematic theoretical revision of the rationale of existing social practices

A tradition of enquiry is necessarily embodied within institutional structures

A tradition of enquiry defines itself with reference to “canonical texts”

A tradition of enquiry is articulated in a form of rationality which derives in part from the institutional structures within which it emerges

It lies well beyond the scope of this piece to attempt a detailed explanation of how these characteristics emerge in the course of MacIntyre’s study, but it will perhaps be helpful to offer a brief, general explanation of each, adverting, where appropriate, to the Aristotelian tradition as an illustrative example.

A tradition of enquiry involves the systematic theoretical articulation of the rationale of existing social practices

This first characteristic emphasises a theme central to MacIntyre’s thought, namely the relationship between practice and theory in organised, social life. From the beginning of *WJWR* the author insists that traditions do not emerge *ex nihilo* but rather *in medias res* in the sense that they evolve within existing forms of social life, which necessarily already involve a complex interplay of practice and theory. In the case of our illustrative example, this form of life is that of the Greek *polis*, with its emphasis on warfare, politics, rhetoric etc.⁶ These practices are already imbued with elements of theory both in the sense of rational explanations and justifications of why certain things are done and in the sense of the standards by which the quality of performance in these practices is evaluated. For the most part these practices and their theoretical underpinning will be taken for granted by the members of the community. A tradition of enquiry emerges (or transforms itself), according to MacIntyre, when at some specific historical juncture there is a need to articulate the existing, nascent theory in a more systematic manner.⁷

To attempt such an articulation implies making appeal to the *raison d’être* and to the self-understanding of the community at a fundamental level. In the case of the *polis*, for instance, this meant an appeal to the *telos* of this social structure, understood as the pursuit of the good of its citizens. To say that Aristotle founded a new tradition of enquiry is to acknowledge that he put in question the conception of the good then held by other members of the *polis* and proposed some viable alternative.⁸

MacIntyre goes on to explain, first in the case of Aristotle and then in the case of the other traditions studied, that this process of revision is only possible because traditions of enquiry are historical, conflictual, dialectical and open. Historical, in that they arise at a given point in the actual history of a community, in the light of that community’s past. Conflictual, in that they involve proposing rival and at times incompatible convictions about what constitutes the good of the community. Dialectical, in that there is an interaction between those holding different convictions with a view to discerning respective merits. Open, in that at any given point, in the

light of new circumstances, the current articulation of the rationale may prove to be inadequate and in need of revision.⁹

A tradition of enquiry is necessarily embodied within institutional structures

To some extent this second characteristic is already implicit in the first characteristic, which focused on the relationship between existing practices and systematic theoretical articulation. These practices (athletics, education, theatre, law-making etc.) cannot be pursued in a vacuum or in isolation but require appropriate structures to “house” them. At the same time, these specific institutional structures (academies, arenas, amphitheatres etc) are located within an overarching social institution, the *polis* itself. The political structures of government, according to this scheme, are the primary institutional structures in that their role is that of governing and ordering the relations between the subordinate structures. At the bottom of the hierarchy will be those unquestioned “structures of normality” which constitute the day to day life of a community and which are only called into question at a time of crisis. A tradition of enquiry emerges, develops and survives, according to this view, not simply through the speculative thought of private individuals but through the construction and maintenance of institutional structures which permit an ongoing process of thought and action in pursuit of the good of a given community.

A tradition of enquiry defines itself with reference to “canonical texts”

A central function of some of the institutional structures just mentioned is that of assimilating, producing and propagating what MacIntyre calls “canonical texts”. This need arises when a community feels the need to thematise its practices and customs, particularly in the face of rival communities with different practices. In this process certain texts are invested with an authority in so far as they are held to be authoritative expressions of the way of life of the community.¹⁰ These texts play a particularly important role in the education and formation of the young who are integrated into the living tradition through both engaging in the practices of the community and studying its canonical texts.

A tradition of enquiry is articulated in a form of rationality which derives in part from the institutional structures within which it emerges

This last characteristic is the most difficult and the most important in MacIntyre’s conception of traditions of enquiry. It attempts to refute any conception of rationality, and hence of politics and ethics, which does not take adequate cognisance of the way in which the social and historical context influences rationality. “Adequate cognisance” here does not mean merely acknowledging the influence of historical circumstances, but rather acknowledging some of these (i.e. institutional structures) as partly constitutive of the form of rationality that is in evidence. Another way of putting this is to say that MacIntyre’s conception of a tradition of enquiry rejects any claim to a rationality which so transcends the context of its articulation as to be available as a neutral measure for competing theories.¹¹ In this sense rationality itself is a concept with a history, a history which manifests different ways of conceiving what rationality is.¹²

In the case of the Greek *polis*, as already noted under the second characteristic, the key institutional structures are hierarchically arranged in such a way that the higher political institutions guide the lower structures in pursuit of the overall *telos* of the *polis*. It is clear that these higher political structures will only be able to ascribe the appropriate importance to the subordinate structures if there is a shared conception of the *telos* of the overall structure. A right judgement with regard to a given subordinate structure, then, means a judgement that ascribes to that structure the importance due to it in terms of its contribution to the whole. In the absence of such a point of reference the judgement as to what importance to ascribe to a subordinate structure, or as to how to evaluate its

contribution to the overall project, will simply not be a *rational* judgement. It is in this sense that we can talk of a form of rationality deriving from the social structures or of these structures being partly constitutive of a form of rationality.¹³ Equally, if rationality is understood as the capacity to reason about the good conceived of as the *telos* of the citizens of a political community, and so permit them to realise their *ergon*, then it ultimately entails a certain conception of justice. To understand rationality in some other way, or to operate out of another form of rationality, even without articulating it in any thematic way, will necessarily issue in a different conception of justice.

It is worth noting, by way of conclusion to this section, some difficulties surrounding MacIntyre's use of the term "form of rationality". This term - or equivalents - is used in a range of senses which go from direct adjectival descriptions of reason (theoretical, practical, deductive, inductive, empirical), through a focus on the goals being pursued (goods of excellence, goods of efficiency) to something tantamount to a *Weltanschauung* (e.g. liberalism). Thus the work does not offer a taxonomy of different "types" of rationality which one could employ for cataloguing a particular form of rationality in contradistinction to others. It does however alert us to the complex relationship between rationality, justice and institutional structures.

II. Catholic Social Teaching: a tradition of enquiry?

Coming now to the second section of this essay, we will address the question as to whether CST can be considered a tradition of enquiry in MacIntyre's sense of the term. A full treatment of this question would involve detailed historical discussion as well as analysis of a large number of texts of quite different kinds. It must suffice here simply to take *Gaudium et spes* (*GS*) as an example of CST. (While there is certainly an issue concerning the way in which *GS*, given its particular genre, is related to other documents of CST, there can be no doubt that it does constitute social teaching.) In what follows the schema outlined above concerning traditions of enquiry will be applied in an "experimental" fashion to this one document, as a kind of test-case of the hypothesis that CST as a whole may be considered a tradition of enquiry. In the third and final section we will then return to a broader perspective on CST as a whole in order to consider the relationship between justice and rationality in the light of MacIntyre's thought.

1. A tradition of enquiry involves the systematic theoretical revision of the rationale of existing social practices

If *GS*, as an example of CST, may legitimately be considered as belonging to a tradition of enquiry then it will presumably manifest this first characteristic of such traditions. Is it true to say that the Pastoral Constitution represents such a theoretical revision of the rationale of existing social practices? In order to answer this question we must discern what are the social practices with which *GS* is concerned and whether it is attempting a systematic revision thereof.

In so far as it is a Pastoral Constitution, *GS* is in the first instance concerned with the life of Christians in the modern world, which in itself involves an extremely complex and extensive set of social practices. At one and the same time, however, the document is concerned with the life of the whole human family, which obviously concerns a much more complex and much more extensive set of social practices. From the beginning, then, and by express intent, *GS* concerns itself with the life of Christians, with the life of all human beings and, perhaps most significantly, with the relationship between the two.¹⁴ These various and interrelated activities are discussed in the two parts of the Constitution in quite different ways, as explained in the famous footnote to the title of

the document.¹⁵ The first part discusses “human activity” in principle whereas the second addresses a range of specific fields of activity.

In order to constitute a tradition of enquiry, however, these social practices need to be approached in a certain way. A tradition of enquiry, as we saw above, emerges or transforms itself when, at a juncture in history, the existing rationale of certain practices is revised. Is *GS* legitimately described as engaging in such a revision? Here again we come up against the two foci of concern in the document. On the one hand, the document can be conceived of as a quite radical revision of the rationale of the activity of the Church itself, as God’s pilgrim people, in the modern world.¹⁶ The very fact that Vatican II was taking place and that the Council decided to produce a Pastoral Constitution is an indication of how deeply this need was felt.

In a broader focus, however, the concern of the Council is not simply with the Church but with the world, or better, with the world within which the Church finds itself, the modern world. The introductory statement on the situation of the modern world focuses on a theme which will be taken up throughout the document in different ways: the consequences of the process of social transformation (“socialization”) for human beings construed as a universal community.¹⁷ Prominent among these consequences are questions of justice, mentioned generically in the introductory statement¹⁸ and then taken up again in Part I and Part II. It is important to note that in the introductory statement the council notes that many people are already posing themselves fundamental questions about the nature of human life and of human society. This agenda, which the Church is eager to take up, has not been set by the Church but rather by human reflection on the rapid processes of transformation. The statement alludes in various ways to the trauma involved in this process of change, a trauma expressed in the list of questions in §10: “...what is man? What is this sense of sorrow, of evil, of death, which continues to exist despite so much progress? What purpose have these victories purchased at so high a cost? What can man offer to society, what can he expect from it? What follows this earthly life?” Such questions, and other like them¹⁹, surely constitute a profound revision of a whole way of life, including the social practices to which MacIntyre refers. The council declares its purpose as that of offering to all human beings engaged in this traumatic process of change the view of human life and society which it gleans from Christ: “Hence under the light of Christ, the image of the unseen God, the firstborn of every creature, the council wishes to speak to all men in order to shed light on the mystery of man and to cooperate in finding the solution to the outstanding problems of our time.” (§10).

2. A tradition of enquiry is necessarily embodied within institutional structures

Moving on to the second characteristic of MacIntyre’s conception of traditions of enquiry, we must consider the relationship between *GS*, as an example of CST, and the institutional structures within which it becomes “embodied”.

On this score too the answer is by no means univocal, for the same reasons as we saw with regard to the first characteristic. The most immediate “institutional structure” in question is of course the Council itself. Within the Council, or in association with it, we can think of the various commissions, preparatory committees and so forth within which the text is shaped. All these structures are only possible, in turn, because of the pre-existing institutional structure of the Church, with its innumerable substructures in the form of Curia, Sacred Congregations, dioceses, parishes, universities, religious congregations, seminaries, religious associations etc. There is thus an obvious and direct relationship between *GS*, as a text belonging to CST, and a whole range of institutional structures of an ecclesiastical nature.

Given the double focus of *GS* noted above, however, this answer is incomplete. The document insists from the beginning that the Church, as God's people, is intimately involved in the world of civil society.²⁰ When the document focuses on the life of specific human communities or of the whole human community, it concerns itself with structures other than Church structures (let us call them civil structures). It does so in a spirit of dialogue ("conversation") with those who are not members of the Church community. The enquiry undertaken as to how human society should be shaped in the future is conducted with reference to the institutional structures of civil society and aspires to inspire and influence these.

These civil structures are operated by Christians and non-Christians alike, both of which groups are addressees of the document. In so far as Christian citizens manage to live according to the teaching on the human person and human society in their civil lives, they themselves embody the teaching contained in the document.²¹ In so far as non-believers contribute to the effective and productive operation of these structures they too are unknowingly involved in the realization of God's plan for society.²² Thus while it is certainly true that the primary institutional structures involved are those of the Church, we should note the importance of the interaction between these structures and the civil structures of modern society. It is surely no exaggeration to say that a key concern of *GS* is precisely with the way in which these different structures can most fruitfully interact.²³

3. A tradition of enquiry defines itself with reference to "canonical texts"

With regard to the third characteristic, what texts does *GS* treat as "canonical"? In the use of this phrase within his theory MacIntyre has borrowed a term from classical theological vocabulary and employed it in a particular sense, introducing inverted commas to mark this usage. In the case of *GS* the first thing we can do is remove these commas and notice that a considerable number of canonical texts are cited. There can be no doubt that, if CST can be legitimately construed as a tradition, then these texts are fundamental to the way in which it defines itself. On this basis we can affirm that *GS* draws heavily on a range of Scriptural texts concerning Christ, Creation, Redemption, human dignity etc.

This much said, the question arises as to whether *GS* also defines itself in relation to other "canonical" texts, in the broader sense intended by MacIntyre. At least four candidates emerge, clearly at different levels of authority: the Fathers of the Church, several of whom are cited in the footnotes, St. Thomas, who is also cited, former documents of CST²⁴ in particular *Pacem in terris*, other documents of the Council (especially *Lumen gentium*). To these one might add the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which, though not directly cited, is surely recognised as an authoritative source of the moral appeal to human rights.

4. A tradition of enquiry is articulated in a form of rationality that derives in part from the institutional structures within which it emerges

In discussing above the second characteristic of traditions of enquiry we noted that the "institutional structures" with which *GS* is concerned are of two kinds, ecclesiastical and civil. If this fourth characteristic of MacIntyre's conception applies to *GS* then both these types of structure will be partly responsible for the form of rationality evident in the document.

As noted above, MacIntyre's use of the phrase "form of rationality" does not provide us with any straightforward way of classifying "types" of rationality. Nonetheless, a close reading of *GS* with

this issue in mind provides much material for reflection, particularly if we consider the processes of editing which led to the definitive text.

A first level of reflection might concern texts which explicitly treat of “new ways of thinking”. In such texts the Council shows itself to be aware of important changes in the way people think in the modern world and to be interested in the consequences of these changes.²⁵ In this sense “forms of rationality”, used in the same broad way as it is used by MacIntyre, constitutes an item on the Council’s agenda, it is a declared subject of interest and examined as such.

Reading *GS* in the light of MacIntyre’s conception of ethical traditions, however, means going well beyond noting what the Council says *about* new forms of rationality. It extends to a consideration of the form of rationality that is operative in the authors themselves and the relationship between this form of rationality and the institutional structures within which CST is located. This second level of reflection might focus on the innumerable judgements that the document offers on the social practices of the modern world.²⁶ The normative vision upon which these judgements are based is not presented in a systematic way (given the genre and scope of this type of document).²⁷ It is not difficult, however, to discern the strong presence of the Augustinian and the Thomistic ethical traditions concerning justice in the document.²⁸ Nor can there be much doubt that this form of rationality is closely related to the key institutional structure within which both were operating, the Church. So on this score there would seem to be good grounds for accepting that *GS* does indeed illustrate the connection between the form of rationality of a given tradition and the institutional structures in which it is embodied.

A third level of reflection on *GS*, still in the light of this fourth characteristic of traditions of enquiry, concerns the relationship between the form of rationality in evidence and what we have called civil structures. On this score it would seem necessary to speak not of a form of rationality but of different forms of rationality operative in the text. If the judgements offered on the moral quality of specific social practices are often identifiably rooted in a form of rationality that we might describe as “classical, normative, deductive”, *GS* is not privy of statements which betray a contrasting type of rationality that we might describe as “innovative, dynamic, inductive”. The best known example of this contrast is perhaps the handling of moral issues in the schema *De ordine morali* and their handling in the definitive text.²⁹ If this does not represent a clash of rationalities it is difficult to imagine what would. The point here, however, is not simply to note the clash of rationalities but also to consider MacIntyre’s suggestion that this alternative form of rationality is to be attributed, at least in part, to the institutional structures within which CST emerges. As noted above, these are not simply the institutional structures of the Church but these structures in their relation to the emerging social and political structures of modern society. Perhaps the most striking example of this is the appeal to human rights as a moral category within the document. While the text is at pains to root this discourse in Scriptural teaching on the dignity of the human person (see Part I Chapter I), human rights discourse is of course directly associated with the kind of social transformation and cultural change typical of modernity,³⁰ which is a central concern of *GS*. It would therefore seem reasonable to suggest that, alongside a form of rationality typical of Roman Catholic theological tradition, the document manifests the use of a form of rationality typical of modern, liberal culture precisely in so far as it makes appeal to human rights. The fuller implications of this claim will be considered in the final section of this study.

III. The challenge posed by MacIntyre’s thought to CST with regard to rationality and justice

Our reading of *Gaudium et spes*, as an example of CST, thus offers considerable grounds for thinking of CST as a tradition of enquiry in MacIntyre's sense of the term, even if it also raises questions about the specificity of this tradition. The purpose of this final section is to indicate briefly some major implications of this affirmation for our understanding of the relationship between justice and rationality in CST. One way of arranging these, true to MacIntyre's insistence on narrative, will be to note in turn how CST might locate itself with respect to past traditions, understand itself in relation to rival contemporary traditions and project itself into the future as a living, open tradition.

As regards past traditions, one key question that arises is whether CST constitutes the continuation of an existing tradition, a merging of traditions or a new tradition. Given the degree to which CST makes appeal to an understanding of justice articulated in Aquinas (in his synthesis of Aristotle and Augustine) there can be no question of considering it simply a new tradition. On the other hand, it is hardly a direct continuation of the Thomistic tradition in that, among other reasons, it introduces forms of argumentation about justice (most obviously, human rights discourse) which are not directly derivable from this source.³¹ The best way for CST to locate itself in terms of past traditions might therefore be to recognise a defining continuity with the Thomistic tradition but to acknowledge the integration of substantial elements of social and political theory concerning justice from the modern, liberal tradition³² (including that paradoxical variant of this tradition which we find in socialist thought³³).

As regards interaction with other contemporary traditions, MacIntyre insists, in the descriptive statement quoted earlier, on the conflictual nature of this interaction, both externally and internally. If we recall the social and political circumstances at the time of *Rerum novarum*, or at the time of *Centesimus annus*, we can easily perceive why CST involved conflict in that it dissented from certain socio-political theories and practices of socialism and capitalism. The internal conflict most in evidence concerning justice in recent times has been perhaps the heated debate concerning the theology of liberation.³⁴ In both cases, MacIntyre's theory implies an extremely demanding project of discussion and debate in which CST, having located itself in continuity with the Thomistic tradition, attempts to engage with the questions raised by these more recent conflicts. Given the demise of the Soviet system, the central point of conflict now is with certain aspects of liberal culture.³⁵ A good case could be made, indeed, for thinking of CST as the result of an ongoing "epistemological crisis" in which theology is forced to recognise the limitations of the Thomistic tradition as a response to the questions raised by the liberal tradition on a whole range of social, economic and political issues. A reading of CST along the lines of our reading of *GS* would suggest that it borrows some answers to these questions from the liberal tradition, but does not succeed in integrating them into the predominantly Thomistic vision. The challenge, as explained by MacIntyre with reference to other traditions, is to discover if and how an existing, dominant tradition³⁶ needs to be modified or transformed if it is to take cognisance of questions that it cannot handle on the basis of its own resources.

This raises fundamental and quite controversial questions about the relationship between theology and modern, liberal culture. Some, most notably perhaps Stanley Hauerwas and John Milbank, in their respective ways, question both the possibility and the desirability of any attempt to merge these contrasting traditions. Others, such as Karl Merks³⁷, tend to see such attempts as efforts at a kind of restoration of an obsolete moral theology. Wherever one's sympathies lie in this conflict of opinion, MacIntyre's conception of traditions of enquiry offers at least a framework within which one can usefully follow and interpret this ongoing debate. There are of course many who do not accept the framework in the sense that they consider MacIntyre's whole proposal concerning traditions of enquiry as inherently reactionary.³⁸ One can only hope that these critics explain more

adequately what is wrong with MacIntyre's scheme and propose an alternative (in so doing they may run the risk of accepting, despite themselves, the central claims of this scheme).

As regards the future of CST, this will depend, according to MacIntyre's theory, on the way in which it handles conflict, both internal and external to the tradition. Progress in CST as theological tradition will depend on narrating its past as comprehensively and honestly as possible³⁹ and attempting to continue that narration in a manner that takes cognisance of contemporary challenges. The key contribution of MacIntyre is his invitation to recognise the historicity of any form of rationality and to see the implications of this for justice.⁴⁰ On this score CST, particularly in the broader sense of Catholic Social Thought⁴¹, faces a major challenge.

The content of this challenge might be expressed by the juxtaposition of the two questions which constitute the title of this piece and which are obviously inspired by the questions we find in the title: *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* By juxtaposing these two questions in this manner, and thus suggesting a third question concerning the link between the two, the author hints at his underlying thesis, namely that there is a profound connection between different conceptions of justice and different forms of rationality. In a similar way, it seems to me that the central challenge facing CST, in the light of MacIntyre's thought, is to pose itself two questions: *God's Justice? Right Reason?* By juxtaposing these questions in this way a third, crucial question emerges: what is the relationship between the conception (conceptions?) of justice we find in CST and the form (forms?) of rationality in which it is expressed? Or, put in another way, does CST recognise that this juxtaposition is not arbitrary but expressive of an inherent link between its conception of justice in the light of revelation and the form of rationality in which this conception is expressed?⁴²

The direct appeal to "right reason", so typical of the argumentation we find in CST, risks appearing as if it were beyond tradition (hence, *not* historical, conflictual, dialectical and open). The price to be paid for such a stance is high in that it tends to ignore, or at least underestimate, the importance of the very different forms of rationality operative in Scripture and in modern liberal culture and, *consequently*, the different conceptions of justice which emerge. The alternative, suggested by MacIntyre's thought on traditions of enquiry, would be for CST to recognise the historicity of the various forms of rationality in operation (in Scripture, in Thomas, in liberalism etc.⁴³) and the historicity of its own attempt to continue the Thomistic tradition in a profoundly changed cultural context. In undertaking the arduous task of discerning the implications of these interacting rationalities for a christian vision of justice in the modern world, I know of no contemporary idea more serviceable than that of MacIntyre's traditions of enquiry.

¹ A. MCINTYRE, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988).

² For a discussion of this idea, as proposed by L. Laudan, in the context of theological tradition see V. GÓMES MIER, "Sobre tradición y tradiciones de investigación", *La Ciudad de Dios* CCIX.1 (1996) 231-270. A broader and more technical discussion of reasoning in theological tradition is to be found in J.E. THEIL, "Tradition and Authoritative Reasoning: A Nonfoundationalist Approach" *Theological Studies* 56 (1995) 627-651; see also T. SALZMAN, "The Basic Goods Theory and Revisionism: A Methodological Comparison on the Use of Tradition in Ethical Theory." *Studia Moralia* 40/1(2002) 171-204.

³ For an extensive primary and secondary bibliography of MacIntyre see: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/philosophy/macintyre>.

⁴ *WJWR*, 10.

⁵ *WJWR*, 12.

⁶ For a detailed list see *WJWR*, 30. For a discussion of the idea of "practices" in MacIntyre's earlier work *After Virtue* see T. KENNEDY, "The Intelligibility of Moral Tradition in the Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre" *Studia Moralia* XXIX/2 (1991) 309-310.

⁷ "A tradition of enquiry is more than a coherent movement of thought. It is such a movement in the course of which those engaging in that movement become aware of it and of its direction and in self-aware fashion attempt to engage in its debates and to carry its enquiries forward." *WJWR*, 326.

⁸ *WJWR*, 91.

⁹ *WJWR*, 34.

¹⁰ *WJWR*, 354-356.

¹¹ "...it is an illusion to suppose that there is some neutral standing ground, some locus for rationality as such, which can afford rational resources sufficient for enquiry independent of all traditions." *WJWR*, 367. This view has been challenged recently in N. ORMEROD, "Faith and Reason: Perspectives from MacIntyre and Lonergan" *The Heythrop Journal* 46/1 (2005) 11-22

¹² *WJWR*, 9.

¹³ A favorite phrase of MacIntyre in this regard is "tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive rational enquiry", *WJWR*, 10.

¹⁴ "Therefore the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives..." (*GS*, § 2; unless otherwise indicated, all such paragraph references in what follows are to *Gaudium et spes*). The Preface to the document announces this dual focus while Part I, Chapter IV takes up the theme of the role of the Church in the modern world in detail.

¹⁵ "...In the first part the church develops its doctrine about humanity, the world in which human beings live, and its own relationship to both. In the second it concentrates on several aspects of modern living and human society, and specifically on questions and problems which seem particularly urgent today..." For a discussion of the implications of this note see R. GALLAGHER "The Significance of a Note: The implications of *Gaudium et spes* for fundamental moral theology", *Studia Moralia* 42/2 (2004) 451-463.

¹⁶ Among a number of quite sharp admonitions contained in the document regarding the self-understanding of Christians is the following: "They are mistaken who, knowing that we have here no abiding city but seek one which is to come, think that they may therefore shirk their earthly responsibilities... This split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age." (§43).

¹⁷ "Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world... Hence we can already speak of a true cultural and social transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well." (§4).

¹⁸ "Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy." (§4).

¹⁹ A list of questions of a more concrete and practical nature is found at the beginning of Part I, Chapter 3, §33.

²⁰ "...this community realizes that it is truly linked with mankind and its history by the deepest of bonds." (§1).

²¹ Cf. §34.

²² "Indeed whoever labors to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence and gives them their dignity." §36.

²³ The thorny question of the legitimate autonomy of civil structures is discussed in §36.

²⁴ There is an explicit acknowledgment of this continuity in §23 "Since rather recent documents of the Church's authority have dealt at considerable length with Christian doctrine about human society, this council is merely going to call to mind some of the more basic truths, treating their foundations in the light of revelation."

²⁵ Among various possibilities consider "This scientific spirit has a new kind of impact on the cultural sphere and on modes of thought." (§5); "Respect and love ought to be extended also to those who think or act differently than we do in social, political and even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we come to understand their ways of thinking through such courtesy and love, the more easily will we be able to enter into dialogue with them." (§28).

²⁶ The justification for passing such judgements is expressed in §76 as follows "It is only right, however, that at all times and in all places, the Church should have true freedom to preach the faith, to teach her social doctrine, to exercise her role freely among men, and also to pass moral judgement in those matters which regard public order when the fundamental rights of a person or the salvation of souls require it." Specific examples of such judgements can be found in §§ 4, 10, 30, 65, 75.

²⁷ The document does contain a number of explicit normative statements such as the following: "Hence, the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and that it allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it." (§35)

²⁸ The constant appeal to the common good as a decisive moral criterion is perhaps the best illustration of this cf. §§ 26, 29, 65, 68, 71, 74, 75.

²⁹ For a detailed discussion of this issue see the second chapter of P. BORDEYNE, *L'homme e son angoisse. La théologie morale de << Gaudium et spes >>*. (Paris: CERF, 2004).

³⁰ For a discussion of this theme see: M. MCKEEVER, "The Use of Human Rights Discourse as a Category of Ethical Argumentation in Contemporary Culture", *Studia Moralia* 38 (2000), 100-125.

³¹ Some authors seem to see little difficulty in deriving contemporary human rights discourse directly from a reading of Aquinas, see for example J. FINNIS, *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Thought*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) 132-140.

³² MacIntyre suggests that the story of liberalism as a tradition has yet to be told and is in any case still in course, a fact which perhaps helps to understand why it is not easy to explain how and why certain elements of the liberal tradition have been integrated into CST.

³³ For a reading of Marx in this light see J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory, Beyond Secular Reason*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990) 177-205.

³⁴ One recalls the two Instructions published by the SCDF: *Libertatis nuntius* in 1984 and *Libertatis conscientia* in 1986. For a review of this debate see M. MCKEEVER “Frühling in Medellín. Dreiig Jahre Befreiungstheologie” *Theologie der Gegenwart* 46 (2003) 161-169.

³⁵ *Centesimus Annus* offers a range of reflections on this theme, perhaps most notably in §42.

³⁶ I refer here, of course, to the dominance of the Thomistic tradition in CST on justice and not to the dominant tradition in contemporary culture as such, which is undoubtedly liberalism. There is no reason in principle why this latter, in the face of its limitations, might not draw on elements of the Thomistic tradition.

³⁷ For a debate on tradition and morality see B.V. JOHNSTONE, “Can Tradition Be a Source of Moral Truth?” *Studia Moralia* XXVII/2 (1999) 431-451 and K.-W. MERKS, “Tradition und moralische Wahrheit” *Studia Moralia* XXXVIII/1 (2000) 265-278.

³⁸ See J. HORTON, S. MENDUS (eds.) *After MacIntyre. Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre*. (Cambridge: The Polity Press, 1994); P. McMYLOR, *Alasdair MacIntyre: Critic of Modernity*. (London-New York: Routledge, 1994).

³⁹ The new *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004) does not attempt to narrate this history in any detail, but it is surely an eloquent reminder of the need to do. Among recent works which have attempted such a narration, albeit rather schematically, see C. E. CURRAN, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891-Present. A Historical, Theological, and Ethical Analysis*. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ “So rationality itself, whether theoretical or practical, is a concept with a history: indeed, since there are a diversity of traditions of enquiry, with histories, there are, so it will turn out, rationalities rather than rationality, just as it will turn out that there are justices rather than justice.” *WJWR*, 9. Later, MacIntyre is at pains to point out that recognising the historicity of rationality does not necessarily imply accepting relativism, but rather may well be the only way of challenging the assumptions of relativism so common in contemporary thought. See *WJWR*, chapter XVIII *passim*.

⁴¹ This important and useful distinction is found in J.S. Boswell/F.P. McHugh/J. Verstraeten (eds.) *Catholic Social Thought Twilight or Renaissance?* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2000). This volume contains an interesting article by J. VERSTRAETEN on Catholic Social Thought as Tradition which draws on the thought of MacIntyre.

⁴² Perhaps the most explicit statement in this regard in *GS* is: “...the Church down through the centuries and in the light of the Gospel has worked out the principles of justice and equity demanded by right reason both for individual and social life and for international life, and she has proclaimed them especially in recent times.” (§63). For a broader discussion of the theme of right reason in Thomas see D. WESTBERG, *Right Practical Reason. Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

⁴³ MacIntyre explains at the end of the first chapter (10) that he makes no attempt to narrate the traditions of Judaism, much less that of “that unfortunate fiction, the so-called Judeo-Christian tradition”, and no attempt to narrate the liberal tradition other than in the Scottish version centred on David Hume.