

# Concept of Rationality in Alasdair MacIntyre's *Dependent Rational Animal* and *Whose Justice Which Rationality?*

John Maina Mwangi<sup>1\*</sup>, Patrick Ouma Nyabul<sup>2</sup> and John Muhenda<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Philosophy, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Nairobi, Kenya

<sup>2</sup>Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, University of Nairobi, Nairobi, Kenya

Corresponding author: jmaina1616@gmail.com

**Abstract:** Time and again, we are confronted with the dilemma of evaluating human conduct. The preceding is realized guided by the comprehension that man is a rational being, thus, ought to conduct himself in a manner that befits the character of a reasonable entity. The notion of a reasonable human being is here to be understood from the perspective of posing the question, what would someone else do in such a scenario? The preceding merely implies someone of ordinary prudence and not a superhuman. The core argument of this paper is that unreasonableness leads to social-holistic disorder, thus, a redefinition would suffice. To look into the problematic nature herein, the paper employed hermeneutics coupled with analytical (analytical hermeneutics). The paper associates itself with the social system theory. Having delved into the foregoing aspects of this paper, it was realized that, the idea of a reasonable person of ordinary prudence in a given circumstance, seems to be misunderstood with the doctrine of truth. Thus, the paper as a way forward argues for a keen distinction for a proper comprehension between the usage of ordinary prudence and truth in the realm of morality.

**Keywords:** Rationality, Alasdair MacIntyre, dependent, rational animal, justice.

**Citation:** John Maina Mwangi, Patrick Ouma Nyabul and John Muhenda. 2018. Concept of Rationality in Alasdair MacIntyre's *Dependent Rational Animal* and *Whose Justice Which Rationality?*. International Journal of Current Innovations in Advanced Research, 1(7): 57-71.

**Copyright:** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. **Copyright©2018;** John Maina Mwangi, Patrick Ouma Nyabul and John Muhenda.

## 1. Introduction

The paper explores the connotation of rationality. It makes use of some of the main philosophers who has explored rationality in their work. The point of much interest will be to know how human beings could use right reasoning in their lives to live a better life. The clarification will additionally look into the role of the right reasoning in the human being and how it contributes to the conduct.

Furthermore, the piece of work seeks to explain the role of moral reasoning in human actions with an interest in man as a moral agent. Similarly, there will be an endeavour to explicate the meaning and the concept of rational desires of man and how they contribute to the moral living. In connection with this, the paper aspires to search for the irrational desire in order to expound on why man at times acts irrationally while he is supposed to act rationally. The paper attempts to examine the denotation of rationality considering the work of MacIntyre and especially use his text, *Dependent Rational Animal* and *Whose Justice Which*

*Rationality?* From the erstwhile, the paper would like to analyze whether men could be able to live rationally and how they could achieve this goal. The preceding will try to illuminate the reason for his action(s), why he conducts himself in a rational manner as well as why at other times we find him behaving irrationally. The intent shall be to look into the conduct, which is the material object of Ethics *per se*.

## 2.0 What is rationality?

The word rationality suggests complexity, the organization even elegance. Rationality at its core suggests something rich and textured about our experience. The reasoning is not limited to our ability to criticize and argue or even to “figure things out” but rather includes the perspicacity and vision to see complexity and order to find meaning in disorder and confusion to distinguish as well as to simplify.

*Rationality* one would say is an honorific, an endorsement or a word of praise. To say that something is rational indeed is to give it higher marks, in philosophy is to give it the highest marks. To say of human beings that they are *rational* is not just a piece of description anthropology. It is also a bit of self-praise. To say that a person behavior or of an idea that it is rational is to say that there is something very right about it, something orderly, fit, appropriate, praiseworthy.<sup>1</sup> Rationality is a key factor that helps to differentiate man from another animal. It makes man to be considered higher in relation to other animals.

Rationality whether of reflection or of insight has long had an important relation to God, to the ultimate truth and to the way the world really is. For Plato, when speaking of rational insight was akin to erotic ecstasy, as insight into perfect forms. Rationality has always been ultimately attached to the good and to values not just to validity and cleverness. To reduce rationality to reasoning and reasoning to logic and argument is to deprive philosophy not only of its passion but also of its substance.<sup>2</sup>

MacIntyre believes that modern philosophy and modern life are characterized by the absence of a coherent moral order. He believes that the overwhelming majority of people living in this world lacks a substantive sense of purpose in their lives and additionally lacks any real community. He attracts on the concept of the Greek Polis and Aristotle’s philosophy to propose a distinct means of life within which individuals work along in genuinely political communities to acquire the virtues and fulfill their innate human purpose.<sup>3</sup>

## 3.0 Meaning of Right Reason

Human reason derives from experience in the ethical field of our conscious awareness. Our human experience provides the material on which to work. We examine our own conduct and also observe human life around us and the actions we see others doing. We tend to forget that intellect is not something separate from the rest of the person and that it cannot function on its own. Rather its integral part of human being and has its place within consciousness and reason, in its wider sense. Thus, reason includes all the feelings, emotions and sensibilities as well as the moods and desires along with intellect.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Robert C. Solomon, *the Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin versus Passionate Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>3</sup> [www.lep.utm.edu/mac-over/](http://www.lep.utm.edu/mac-over/)

<sup>4</sup> Milton A. Gonzales, *Right and Reason, Ethics in Theory and Practice* ninth Edition (Ohio: Merrill Publication Company, 1990), p. 122.

Reasons to differentiate man from other animals but still, he is supposed to have the right reason for him to live well in his life. A person who does not integrate feeling, emotions, and sensibilities along with the moods and desires into whatever program of life he/she is devising would be considered a very unreasonable person. The truly reasonable person is the total human being, not one who lives by intellect alone. Intellect has to be its own critic. This means that to determine when intellect is right and when it is wrong, there is nothing else to appeal to but intellect itself. By use of intellect, we discover the truth and by use of the same intellect, we are capable of error. In practices matters of moral living, we use intellect to discover the right thing to do but this same intellect is capable of making mistakes, for example, it can judge as genuinely good what is only apparently good.<sup>5</sup>

Intellect and intellectual reasoning can be right if and only if they are rectified by real emotion apprehending genuine moral values. Intellect can be used rationally when it is consistent with itself and faithful to its own law and function. Intellect can be used irrationally by contradicting itself by subjecting it to a law foreign to it and functioning to its own destruction.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4.0 Right Reason: Intellect as a Norm

Any moral choice is preceded by an awareness of moral values about which intellect deliberates. The deliberations itself is motivated by an emotional awareness of the value awareness. The intellect under the guidance of desire for the good, weighs the reason for and against the contemplated course of action. The reason is expressed in or based on evaluating judgment practical judgment that is in conjunction with desire directive of action. They present to the will for its acceptance the good apprehended by intellect under the direction of and guidance of emotion, the arguments in its favors, the strength of moral obligation involved the general moral principle of which this act is an instance and therefore the reasonableness of choosing this form of action.

There is as yet no guarantee that the moral principles I hold are correct and the moral values genuine. The next point in intellect's self-examination is to see why I had these principles and values. By nature, we are morally animate but rational as well and we must also live as rational beings. The life of brute is not suitable for a being of reason in the wide sense of that word. Our rational and non-rational sides must be kept in harmony with a spirit develops in our nature.<sup>7</sup>

#### 4.1 Practicality of the Norm

The following are the affirmative reasons: The norm must be such that from it the same rules of morality can be attributed for all human beings. By its nature, a standard must be applicable to all the object of a class. To say that each person has his or her own standard of conduct is the same as saying that there is no standard at all human nature, as rational and free is common to all human beings.<sup>8</sup>In short, the norm should be universal. It should apply to a whole class of man. Rationality should apply to all human beings without leaving others out. Although some people act irrationally, it is their behavior that is irrational not them as a rational animal. This is the reason they are held responsible and can be punished because of their action. When a man kills another man, for instance, he is punished if he is of sound

---

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p 122.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

mind, but if an animal kills a man it cannot be punished or be put to prison because it does not use reason.

The norm must be such that from it all the rules of morality can be desired. The norm of morality is that standard by that human acts are compared to work out their goodness or badness. The ultimate standard guarantees the validity of the proximate norm. Human nature is the proximate norm of morality because it is common to everyone and the rules derived from it will be applicable to all human beings. Moreover, unchangeable attribute basically is versatile enough to admit of variable applications in line with circumstances. It is conjointly present and manifests to any or all humanity. A norm is a rule that regulates voluntary behaviour. Norm is thought to have a moral standing when people typically directly suffer when the norm is violated, the norm is regularly, it is widely thought that violating the norm is immoral and the norm is well defined.

The norm must be immutable yet flexible enough to admit varying applications according to circumstances. If the norm is not immutable it is not standard at all yet it will be useless if it is not applicable to every possible circumstance of human conduct for this is what is supposed to measure. Hence the norm must be flexible without being elastic like a tape measure that is fixed to in length but can conform to any surface. Human nature is immutable in essentials but accidentally variable, specifically the same but individually diversified and a human being with its obstructive power can separate the essentials from the accidentals.

The norm must be constantly present and manifest to all human beings. Human acts entail responsibility and if we could perform them without being able to find the norm of the morality of which we could not determine we must therefore whenever confronted with a rational choice always be able to compare our conduct with the norm.

If human nature taken completely as rational and free is the norm of morality present to everyone always and everywhere, why are there so much mayhem in the world and so little peace? Are some of us mistaken about our personhood?<sup>9</sup> This is the major question that most of the people may be asking. It is the behaviors and activities of a man that is irrational and punishable because those who act irrationally are irresponsible for their action. Human nature is universal to all mankind.

The intellect itself must be the judge. It is right when it's rationally exercised, consistent with itself faithful to its own law. In moral matters, this rational exercise of intellect is guided and directed by real emotions, emotions directed outward to persons and things to reveal their intrinsic values.<sup>10</sup>

### 5.0 Moral Reasoning

Without correct reasoning, people who have good intentions may end up actually causing harm. This is because, although people may be strongly motivated to do what is right, they cannot always figure out what is the way to achieve this goal. A clear understanding of logic and moral reasoning can assist us to break through this pattern of resistance. It is through sharpening our analytical skills that we can become more independent in our thinking and less susceptible to opinions that foster narrow mindedness and bigotry.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129.

<sup>11</sup> Judith A. Boss, *Analyzing Moral Issues* (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1999), p. 86.

Some people are so emotionally interested in certain moral issues that they may unintentionally manipulate their arguments in order to *prove* a conclusion that does not logically follow from their premises. When confronted with objections to their position they often resort to resistance and fallacies as a way of shielding their *argument* from critical analysis.<sup>12</sup>

The thinking process used in moral reasoning could be divided into three levels: experience, interpretation, and analysis.<sup>13</sup> We should keep in mind that these three divisions are artificial. We never have for example pure experience or engage in pure analysis. All these three levels overlap and interact well with one another. Experience form the foundation of moral reasoning. For this reasoning, it is very important and noble that we first have our facts straight. Interpretation is to make sense of our knowledge.

Analysis of its part is the heart of moral reasoning. Many people find themselves relying on the opinion of a blend of facts and opinion in formulating their views on moral issues. It is continuously important to learn how to distinguish between the two. An opinion is a statement based on feeling rather than fact. Unless we back up our interpretation with facts, they are merely opinions whether they may be those of the majority or our personal opinion. Analysis of moral issues requires not only beginning with correct facts but examining the possible interpretation of our experiences in light of fundamental moral principle and sentiments.<sup>14</sup>

### 5.1 Moral Rationality

Moral rationality requires constancy, which includes the golden rule “treat others only as you consent to being treated in the same situation.”<sup>15</sup> Rationality also at the same time requires other elements like knowledge and imagination.<sup>16</sup> Moral reasoning is a process in which an individual tries to determine the difference between what is right and what is wrong in a personal situation. People make such decision by reasoning out the morality of the action and consideration of what is against the outcome. There are four components of moral behaviours. One of them is a moral sensitivity that is, the ability for one to see an ethical dilemma, how the action did will affect the other people.

The second one is a moral judgment; this is the ability for one to reason correctly about what ought to be done in a specific situation. The essential difference between moral reasoning and other forms of reasoning is that the conclusion supported by moral is a moral judgment. The third component is moral motivation which is the personal commitment to moral action, the ability of one to accept the responsibility of the outcome. The fourth component is a moral character; this is the courageous persistence in spite of fatigue to the temptation to take the easy way.

### 6.0 Reason Conditions

The arguments could be that we are more rational in our moral thinking to the extent that we are more consistent, informed and imaginative, and a few more things. While we will never be completely rational we can strive for greater rationality.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> Henry J. Genslev, *Ethics a Contemporary Introduction* (New York: Routledge Publishing Company, 2000), p. 124.

We need to be Consistent. These include logically ends-means consistency consciousness, impartiality, the golden rule, self-regard, future regard and formula of universal law.<sup>17</sup>

Consistency means the absence of contradictions. Ethics should provide us with a guide for moral living and to do so it must be rational and to be rational it must be free of contradiction. If our moral principles lack consistency we have a tendency as rational individuals, find ourselves at loss on what we have a tendency to do and how we ought to live. Ethics needs consistency within the sense that our ethical standards, actions, and values should not be contradictory. Here, consistency means a person's actions are in harmony with his inner values.

There is a need to be well informed. We need to know the situation, alternative moral views and ourselves. We need to know the situations, circumstances, alternatives, consequences and so on. The moment that we are misinformed or ignorant of our thinking flows. There is a call for us to know the optional ethical views including arguments for or against; our thinking is less rational if we are unaware of opposing views. Eventually, we need self-knowledge. By apprehending our biases we come to an extent of neutralizing them thus we need to understand where our feelings and ethical beliefs originated, for instance, some people are hostile toward a precise cluster as a result of the education they received at their early age.

Their attitude might change if they understood the source of hostility and broadened their experience if so then their attitudes are less rational since they exist because of ignorance.<sup>18</sup>

We need to be imaginative, vivid and accurately aware of what it would be like to be in place of those affected by our behaviours. The previous is different from knowledge of facts. Imagining another's perspective is a common human experience the ability to take another's perspective, that is, empathy is especially important for applying the golden rule.<sup>19</sup> The principle of treating others as one would wish to be treated. What one would wish upon others, you wish upon yourself that is, place yourself in the shoes of others.

There are a few more things we need to put into consideration. Feel free to think for oneself instead of just conforming. Develop feelings that support the rational principles especially feelings of concern for yourself and for others. Feelings can give us the direction when we don't have time to think things out. Dialogue with others in our society we live in and in other societies.

In areas where we do not have the time or ability to be very rational, we should be ready to give weight to their view of those who are more rational. We should give weight to the views of those who are more rational especially if there's a consensus.<sup>20</sup> We should not be dogmatic on areas where rational people differ. We are rational in our moral beliefs to the extent that in holding them we satisfy these rationality conditions- and thus are consistent informed, imaginative and few more things.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

## 7.0 Desires

The concern here is on the two brands of desires: rational and irrational.

### 7.1 Rational Desires

In a theory of the good and right Richard Brandt propose a definition of the concept of rational desire. According to Brandt, contrary to what many philosophers here held, a rational critique of the intrinsic desire is possible. As an observation, there is something mistaken about certain desires or aversions, just in themselves or at least in their occurring with the intensity beyond certain points. He believes that our desire for things themselves is subject to rational criticism. In this sense, he believes that there are rational standards of evaluation for our ends. Some of our desire is such that an agent would not have it if she were fully informed then this desire can be criticized for this reason.<sup>22</sup>

Brandt theory and others like it have therefore been called *full information theories*. In this chapter, we critically assess the idea that the only standard for the rationally evaluating our desires is the full information theories, like Brandt's, are plausible they must rely on a distinction between relevant and irrelevant information. We then argue that a plausible distinction cannot be made without normative judgments. The fact that normative judgment is required to assess what information is relevant reveals that the full information standard cannot be only standard in play.<sup>23</sup>

According to Brandt, it is rational to desire what you would desire after a process he calls cognitive psychotherapy. The process requires you to "confront your desires with relevant information by repeatedly representing it in an ideally vivid way and at an appropriate time."<sup>24</sup> There is in words a cognitive component of the genesis of many desires. For the reason that this is so we can rationally criticize desires by scrutinizing this cognitive component. When the cognitive factor leading to a desire has been critically scrutinized as much as possible the resulting desire is rational. A rational desire, in other words, is one that has been maximally criticized.<sup>25</sup>

Golden rule reasoning can be less effective if people have flawed desire about how they are to be treated. As a result, people may satisfy the golden rule consistently and yet act wrongly. To think rationally about ethics is to think in a way that is informed, imaginative and consistent.<sup>26</sup>

### 7.2 Irrational Desire

Brandt lists four types of paradigmatically irrational desire: Desire which depends on false belief; desire that is aroused artificially by cultural transmission (artificial desires are that are conditioned naturally that is through experience with situations that are the subject of the desire); desire based on generalizing from the untypical example and desire resulting from exaggerated violence produced by the early deprivation.<sup>27</sup>

If we look at an example of desires from these four categories we can see that they are indeed paradigms of the kind of desire most of us would want to eliminate. A desire to pursue a

<sup>22</sup> Robert Nozick, *Studies in Ethics* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc. 2000), p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Genslev, *Ethics a Contemporary Introduction, Loc. Cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>27</sup> Nozick, *Studies in Ethics, Loc. Cit.*, p. 9.

career you do not enjoy because you falsely believe your parent wants you to do. For example, some of the Catholic Christians parents would love their children to become priests and religious nuns. They would at times persuade their children to be one. Some of their children would choose to please their parents by going to seminary or convents but deep inside themselves, they would not choose this given the freedom to do so. They end up living unhappy and unfulfilled life just because they want to please their parents.

The desire to succeed at any cost because one has learned to associate success with affection and respect, normally the successful people in the society command affection and respect. There are those due to this fact would like to succeed at all cost because they associate success with affection and respect. This is the result of the community set up and the formation given by the society that success is associated with affection and respect.

A desire to avoid all dogs because of a bad experience with one dog in childhood, this is very common with people. One bad instance makes one avoid similar instances. A bad experience with one dog does not mean that one will experience the same with all dogs. It is possible to have very good experience with others dogs. We should avoid generalization.

A desire to save money obsessively because of early deprivation;<sup>28</sup> this too can happen because of earlier deprivation. During the colonial era in Kenya, there was some community that was deprived of the land. Their lands were taken by the settlers and they were forced to live in villages. After independence, they are obsessively buying land all over because of earlier deprivation. According to Brandt, what makes these desires irrational is that they would not survive maximal criticism. These desires are in some sense based on or developed from cognitive mistakes and can be criticized for that reason.<sup>29</sup>

Brandt does define relevant information functionally. A piece of knowledge has relevancy if its presence in awareness would create a distinction to the person intending to perform a definite act or to the attractiveness of some perspective outcome to him. Information is relevant if it bears on the adequacy of our reason for desiring and it makes sense to exclude information that does not bear on our reasons. In my view however since information improves my reason for deciding, we will be able to see changes in the motivation as justified.<sup>30</sup>

Nazi moral beliefs were irrational since Nazi's would not hold these beliefs consistently if they know the facts of the cause and exercise their imagination. Nazi who desires (out of hatred for Jews) that he and his family be put in concentration camps and killed if they were found out to be Jews would not be consistent. The reason for that it is applying only for some cases. It comes as a result of hatred for Jews. It would contradict the golden rule. Our desire should be consistent in all cases. This makes this desire irrational.

The coal mine owner who is willing (since he is ignorant of the cost of things), that he be paid misery one dollar a day if he were in the place of his workers. Our desires should be informed. If our desires are not well informed then they end up being irrational. The coal miner owner is selfish in dealing with his workers that is why he wants to justify paying his workers poorly. He just wants to justify his selfish motives.

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

The masochist who desire (out of self-hatred) that he be tortured if he were in the place of a non-masochist.<sup>31</sup> Masochist wants to justify himself out of his self-hatred. This desire is irrational in that it is not consistent with all the cases but only on this of self-hatred. This is because the opposite is not true. For a desire to be rational, it must be consistent, informed and imaginative.

For the golden rule, a reason to work properly, we need some way to criticize such desires. We suggest that the desires of the coal-mine owner and of the masochist are irrational if they come from ignorance and would be given up if the person understood things properly. We can use rationality conditions of the previous section to criticize desires “Irrational desires have flaws like inconsistency, ignorance or lack of imaginations.”<sup>32</sup> Our desires might: Inconsistency with our actions, other desires or moral beliefs. Based on current false beliefs, maybe our desires to become doctors, rest on false beliefs about our abilities. Based on previous fake beliefs, maybe we avoid yoghurt only because we once believed it was poisonous. Our desire to avoid yoghurt remains even though we gave up these false beliefs.

Based on generalization, maybe we avoid a certain group because of non-typical personal experience. But this would if we broaden our experience. Based on social conditioning, maybe we avoid a certain group because we were taught to do so. On the other hand, our desires would change if we understood this and broadened our experience. Based on the lack of imagination, maybe we would give up our desires to be a doctor if we imagine the life of a doctor more vividly and accurately.<sup>33</sup>

Our desires might be irrational for various reasons. Brandt’s favorite example of an irrational desire used to be his father’s desire not to eat yoghurt. His desire came from misinformation (yoghurt contains bad germs) his association of yoghurt with weird people (his children and his anti-yoghurt upbringing). Nonetheless, he later broadened his knowledge and experience and changed his desire. Now he eats yoghurt.<sup>34</sup>

Reason and morality are weak forces in us; they need powerful allies like feelings, habit and social approval. We will have difficulty following the golden rule for example unless we develop strong feelings and habits about fairness and concern for others and have those reinforced by the society around us.

Helping children to be mere rational in their ethical thinking is a vital part of ethical education. It is particularly necessary to show these five commandments of rational ethical thinking. We should strive to more informed decisions. It is very important to educate the children about the importance of making informed decisions. This will help them to make rational decisions which will, in turn, help them to be more rational in dealing with their morality. When a person makes an uninformed decision one might end up acting irrationally. We should educate the children not to make rash decisions.

People should live in harmony with moral beliefs. We should strive to live in harmony with our moral beliefs. It would be inappropriate to violate one’s moral beliefs. The moral belief defines a person. When one acts against his moral beliefs he contradicts what he is. We

---

<sup>31</sup> Genslev, *Ethics a Contemporary Introduction, Loc. Cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

should be strong in living our moral beliefs without allowing the influence to abandon what we hold dear and what defines us.

A man should make a similar evaluation about similar actions. We should make an evaluation of our actions. We should be consistent by making a similar evaluation about similar actions. This helps us to avoid a double standard in dealing with moral action. It helps us to be strong in all our moral actions. Put yourself in the place others. This is very important when dealing with other people. For one to understand the feelings of others he must place himself in the place of others. This will make one be in touch with others in society. This will also help one to be human and rational that is, will combine rationality and virtue.

“Treat others as you want to be treated.”<sup>35</sup> This is a golden rule which should apply to all people at all times. The way one would like to be treated by others in a particular situation, the way he should treat others as well. The way he would not like to be treated by others he should not treat others also. This shows that one is rational in dealing with others.

### 8.0 Concept of a Practice and the Origin of Virtues

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre tries to explain another element of what is missing in modern life through his use of the concept of practice. He has given light with the example of an individual who desires to show a disinterested child the way to play chess. That the goal of life is the life of reason was a common-place among the Greek Philosopher. What is meant varied from philosopher to philosopher depending on how the relationship between intellect and emotion were viewed. For Plato, a philosopher is a person in whom the rational is predominant, but this rationality includes the passionate love for the highest good because that good is beauty itself. The kind of rational beauty sponsored by Plato and Socrates includes the worst and meaning of a person's desire to live a better life so that the truly profound thinker must be a lover of truth, goodness, and beauty.<sup>36</sup>

For Aristotle, the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom or prudence under the impulse of a desire for good seeks the midpoint between excess and defect in appetite and emotion and thus acts as norm regulating the practice of the other virtues of which the moral life consists. The Stoic call reason the *hegemonicum*, the ruling power by which one conforms to the law of nature frees oneself from being the plaything of one's emotions and lives the life of a wise person.<sup>37</sup>

### 8.1 Living Rationally as a Virtue

Living consciously is what we call living rationally. It means using the cognitive powers that are endowed on man to make decisions about our lives and beliefs. Rationality living means we are the one thinking it out and we place the same level of questioning on me as you do for anyone else.<sup>38</sup> Emotion is a requirement in many of the decisions we make. The goal of rationality is not to suppress the feelings. Instead, we try to grasp where these emotions come from and veto them once they are inaccurately assumed. Emotion and rationality are not working against each other instead they work together. Rationality ought to grasp where the emotions originate so that it can consciously solve issues and redirect them. Equally,

---

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 136.

<sup>36</sup> Gonzales, *Right and Reason, Loc. Cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.scothyounge.com/blog/2007/10/08/thevirtue-of-living-life-rationally>. (Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016).

emotions ought to give guidance wherever we have a tendency to invest thinking power to resolve issues most relevant to the quality of life. Emotion needs to make a role in decision making. I am simply afraid that majority people justify themselves by this to ignore the brain they were born with.<sup>39</sup>

## 8.2 How to Live Rationality?

Rationality alerts man when he has a false belief that's making him worse off. We have undoubtedly got belief about ourselves about what kind of job would be fulfilling for us for example or about what kind of a person would be a good match for us. We've also got beliefs about the word about what it's like to be rich or about what men and women want. These beliefs shape our decisions about our career what to do when we are sick, how much effort we should put into making ourselves richer or more attractive or more skilled, more accommodative or more aggressive. The startling truth is that many of our beliefs become lodged in our psyches rather haphazardly. We have read or heard or picked them up from books or movies or perhaps we generalized them from one or two real-life examples.

Rationality trains us to notice our beliefs, many of which we may not be consciously aware of and ask ourselves where did these beliefs come from and do we have good reason to think they are accurate? How would we know they are false? Have we considered any of them, that is, the alternative hypothesis?

Rationality helps us get the information we need. Sometimes we would like to work out the solution of an issue so as to create a crucial decision regarding wealth cover and so on. Study of rationality reveals how to work out those issues are likely to yield the truth than others.

Rationality shows how to evaluate advice. Studying concerning rationality and the way widespread irrationality is, sparks a very important realization. You cannot assume people have a sensible reason for the things they believe; meaning you wish to understand a way to judge different people's opinions not simply based on the reliability of the strategy they use to create these opinions.

Rationality saves us from bad decisions. Knowing concerning heuristic our brain uses and the way they can go wrong suggests that we are able to escape some quite common and sometimes very serious decision-making traps. Rationality helps one to make rational decisions. This will even make the person formulate rational arguments.

Rationality trains us to step back from our emotion so that they do not cloud our judgment. Depression, anxiety, anger, envy and other unpleasant and suicidal emotions tend to be fueled by what cognitive therapy calls *cognitive distortions*. Irrationalities in our thinking such as jumping to a conclusion based on limited evidence; focusing selectively on negatives all or nothing and blaming ourselves or someone else without reason. Rationality breaks our habit of automatically trusting our instinctively emotional judgments encouraging us instead to notice the belief underlying our emotion and ask ourselves whether those beliefs are justified.<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

## 9.0 Reason for Action

According to MacIntyre, only those who can give reason can act for a reason so animals cannot act for a reason since they do not have a language. Human is rational reason-giving. Animal's dogs, cats and so on cannot and therefore cannot act for a reason. It is because without the language an animal cannot evaluate that which moves its action. It cannot ask whether its reason for acting as it does is a good reason and so it does not on Kenney's view have a reason.<sup>41</sup>

MacIntyre says that Aquinas had denied to non-human animals the freedom that he ascribes to human animals on the ground that one can pass judgment; "judgment is the power of someone judging to the extent that one can pass judgment on one's own judging. For whatever is our power is something about which we can make a judgment. Nonetheless, to pass judgment on one's own judgment belongs only to reason."<sup>42</sup> About the significance of the power to pass judgment on our judgment as a mark of both rationality and voluntariness, Aquinas is plainly right. Moreover, Kenny is also right in claiming that this ability can only be exercised by the language user. But what is required for the exercise of this ability is not just language but a type of language that has the resources necessary for the formation of sentences with a certain degree of complexity. But this is insufficient for human rationality what is needed in addition is the ability to construct sentences that certain as constituents either the sentences used to express the judgment about what the agent is reflecting or references to these sentences.<sup>43</sup>

A thought of Alasdair from the very publication of his seminal work *After Virtue* has been a source of discussion and debate. One very criticism is MacIntyre's thought lead to a conclusion of relativism. Such accusation seems very old considering MacIntyre's initial self-ascription as an Aristotelian and subsequent identification as a Catholic Thomist. Nevertheless, those claims of relativism have been consistently attached to MacIntyre's thought since *after virtue* despite his efforts in writing *whose justice which rationality*.<sup>44</sup>

MacIntyre's notion of tradition constituted rationality surrounded by a core conception of what he calls *practice*. The development of the concept of practice arises as MacIntyre's attempt to reconstitute morality after what he calls the *failure of the enlightenment project*.

MacIntyre defines practice as, any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of capacity are realized. In the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to and partially definitive of that form of activity with the result that human conceptions of the ends and goods involved are systematically extended.<sup>45</sup>

A distinction clear understanding MacIntyre's notion of practice is between what he calls good "internal" and good "external" to practices. A clear example of a distinction is that MacIntyre uses are illustrated by a child learning to play chess. A young boy is told by his grandfather to sit down and play chess with him. The old man tells the boy every time the boy wins he will get a piece of candy. MacIntyre notes that "as long as it is the candy alone

<sup>41</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animal* (Notre Dame: Indiana University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 53.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981/2007), p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, pp, 4-6.

which provides the child with a good reason for playing chess, the child has no reason not to cheat and every reason provided he can do so successfully.”<sup>46</sup> In this example of the child playing chess, the candy is what MacIntyre calls an “external good” whereas the *internal good* is the realization of the boy becomes a genuinely excellent chess player.<sup>47</sup>

For an action to be intelligible as MacIntyre explains it is for the individual to be able to give an account and explain of that action. He offers an example of the steps involved in making a cake-if we separately perform the actions involved in making cake-breaking eggs, pouring milk, measuring flour and so on, they do not offer an explanation and are thereby unintelligent. Even done together these actions do not offer a full explanation. MacIntyre concludes that we render the actions of others intelligible in this way because the action itself has basically historical characters. “It is because we all live our narratives in our lives ... that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the action of others.”<sup>48</sup>

The individual actions become intelligible in and through the form of life one takes him or herself to be living. Thus, one is able to explain why s/he did this or that action by appeal to what kind of life one takes to be a successful life. We note with MacIntyre that the only criteria for success or failure in a human life as a whole are the criteria of success or failure in a narrated or to be narrated quest. An individual practice is made intelligible by appeal to the good sought and the many practices unified and made intelligible by appeal to the overall conception of the good life possessed by the individual. It is this knowledge of a good life that requires a tradition.<sup>49</sup>

In *After Virtue*, MacIntyre states that, when a tradition is in good order, it is always partially constituted by an argument about the good the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point of purpose. A tradition for MacIntyre appears to be part, a collection of arguments concerning what goods ought to be pursued in a human life. It is this tradition which affords the standard of rationality to particular arguments concerning the good life.<sup>50</sup>

Flourishing as an independent practice reasoned requires the virtues in a second way simply because sometimes we need our friends to tell us who we are. Independent practical reasoning also requires self-knowledge but self-knowledge is impossible without the input of others whose judgment provides a reliable touchstone to test our beliefs about ourselves self-knowledge, therefore, requires the virtues that enable an agent to sustain a formative relationship and to accept the criticism of trusted friends. Human flourishing requires the virtues by making it possible to participate in the social and political action. They enable us to, protect ourselves and others against neglect, defective, sympathize, stupidity, acquisitiveness, and malice by enabling us to form and sustain social relationships through which we may care for one another in our infirmities and pursue a common good with and for the other members of the societies.<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 188.

<sup>48</sup> [www.academia.edu/1082693/rationality-Relativism-and-MacIntyre](http://www.academia.edu/1082693/rationality-Relativism-and-MacIntyre) (Accessed 13th July 2017).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, *Loc. Cit.*, p 222

<sup>51</sup> MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animal*, *Loc. Cit.*, pp. 97-98.

The book moves from Macintyre's assessment of human needs for the virtues to the political implications of that assessment. Social-political institutions that form and enable independent practical reasoning must satisfy three conditions.<sup>52</sup>

They must enable their members to participate in shared deliberations about communities actions. The community should be involved in deliberation about the actions. Communities play a very vital role especially when they participate in deliberation. This is because all are involved in dealing with the actions at hand. The action to be done affects the whole community and man as such. The decision does not only concern the social-political institution. They must establish norms of justice consistent with the exercise of the virtue of justice. There should not be a double standard with the issue of justice. There should be consistency in every case to avoid the problem of injustice. There should be no one who enjoys the privileges because of his status in the community or the position he holds in the community. All should be treated the same. Justice should always prevail to all no matter his status or position in the community.

They must enable the strong 'to stand proxy' as an advocate for the needs of the weak and the disabled.<sup>53</sup> Prejudice held against people with disabilities is shown to be a major harm to the productive outcome of persons in this population. Discrimination from different children and adult within the community is their most important daily problem. Women and children have been found to greatly suffer discrimination and endure a negative outcome. Some of the researchers attribute this to what they believe may be a double rejection of women and girls who are disabled on the basis of their sex in tandem with their special need. Female with a disability is seen as a particular dependent on others and serve to amplify the misconception of their population as burdensome.

*Which Justice Whose Rationality?* presents Macintyre's argument for his theory of rationality. It fulfills a promise made at the end of *After Virtue*: "I promise a book in which I should attempt to say both what makes it rational to act a way rather than another and what makes it rational to advance and defend one conception of practices rationality rather than other."<sup>54</sup> To fulfill the promise Macintyre opens the book by arguing that "enlightenment made us ... blind to ... the conception of rational justification themselves emerge from and are part of history."<sup>55</sup> From the standpoint of human enquiry no group can arrogate to itself the authority to guide everyone else towards the good. We can only struggle together in our quests for justice and truth and each community consequently frames and revises its own standards of justice and rationality.<sup>56</sup> Macintyre concludes that neither reason nor justice is universal: since there is a diversity of traditions of inquiry with histories, therefore it will turn out, rationalities rather than rationality, just as it will also turn out that there are justices rather than justice.<sup>57</sup> Macintyre says that the failure of the dialogue is connected to a failure of the enlightenment thinkers to achieve their ambition of arriving at consensus in truth via the use of reason.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>54</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), p. 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

## 10.0 Conclusion

The paper has delved into the issue of rationality as regards human beings. Owing to the concern, there has been a realization that man is different from other animals and especially in his actions by far. Although sometimes man acts irrationally this does not reduce his nature to be similar to that of irrational animals but only through his actions. The position could be corrected for the reason that the irrational conducts are caused by lack of knowledge in the one capable of it or ignorance, lack of exposure, the environment among others. If the necessary information and training are provided for man and especially when he is still young this would reduce the cases of irrational behaviour.

## References

### Primary Sources

1. MacIntyre Alasdair. 1988. Whose Justice? Which Rationality. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988.
2. \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. After Virtue, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981/2007.
3. \_\_\_\_\_.1999. Dependent Rational Animal, Notre Dame: Indiana University of Notre Dame Press, 1999.

### Secondary Sources

4. Aristotle. 1962. Nicomachean Ethics. New York. The Burbs-Merrill Company Inc.,
5. Boss A. Judith. 1999. Analyzing moral issues, London: Mayfield Publishing Company 1999.
6. Genslev, J. Henry. 2000. Ethics a Contemporary Introduction. New York: Routledge Publishing Company.
7. Gonzales, A. Milton. 1990. Right and Reason: Ethics in theory and practice, ninth edition; Ohio; Merrill Publication Company.
8. Nozick, Robert. 2000. Studies in Ethics. New York: Garland Publishing Inc.
9. Solomon, C. Robert. 1999. The Joy of Philosophy: Thinking Thin versus Passionate Life. New York: Oxford University Press.

### Internet Sources

10. [www.academia.edu/1082693/rationality-Relativism-and-MacIntyre](http://www.academia.edu/1082693/rationality-Relativism-and-MacIntyre) (Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017).
11. <http://www.scothyounge.com/blog/2007/10/08/thevirtue-of-living-life-rationally>. (Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> September 2016).