

Objective Truth, Morality, and Confusion: A New Solution through Narrative and Tradition

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When faced with the prospect of evaluating two competing moral traditions, many of us feel frustrated. Some prevalent postmodern trends tell us that we are unable to choose one tradition as superior over another, since all traditions are relative to a specific culture or religion and therefore cannot be judged objectively. Others following Descartes' lead claim in opposition that there is perfect objective truth to be found only if we can only shed our ingrained biases and approach truth with a blank and inquiring mind. It is no wonder that most of us in contemporary society are poorly equipped to deal with either thorny moral issues or moral traditions alien to our own. As the journey in this paper will show us, enlightenment thinkers began the attempt to systematize morality through reason, and their endeavors hundreds of years ago have left us with this legacy of assuming that there are either unrelated moral traditions which cannot interact or that truth is outside all traditions waiting to be discovered by the unencumbered seeker. It seems, then, that we are forced to hold one of two opposite but equally inadequate positions when it comes to deciding the validity of a moral tradition.

Hope is not lost, however. Two contemporary philosophers, Alasdair MacIntyre and Mark Johnson, have addressed this problem through a new approach: the recognition of the place of historical narrative in shaping moral tradition. These men argue that it is indeed possible to reject moral relativism and Enlightenment-style objectivism and embrace a unique theory of moral approach. Each emphasizes the fact that we cannot understand a person's or a society's moral tradition without understanding it as a story, and it is by understanding the language of that story that we can intelligibly evaluate one tradition against another and decide which is more competent. Where MacIntyre and Johnson differ, however, is in how we understand the resourcefulness important to deciding superiority between two traditions. MacIntyre believes in a form of dialectical resourcefulness in which we seek to discover which tradition can better handle "epistemological crises." Johnson, on the other hand, borrows a cue from Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy and argues for transperspectivity as the new and improved moral objectivity.

In the course of this essay, I plan to accomplish several things. I will present the philosophies of MacIntyre and Johnson, showing their systems of evaluation and understanding of moral traditions. In order to exhibit their thought in action, I will evaluate Augustine's *Confessions* and Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, two pertinent models for MacIntyre's and Johnson's systems. These two works serve as examples by virtue of their being narrative philosophies exhibiting the moral and rational progressions and features that MacIntyre and Johnson will expound upon. In addition, each examined philosopher serves as a foundation for the one examining; Augustine lends his wisdom to MacIntyre's

theories and Nietzsche offers ideas that Johnson adopts in his book. Finally I will turn to the essence of the debate between MacIntyre and Johnson, which I briefly mentioned earlier. Through exploring their systems of moral theory, we will see that each one is also working from within his own tradition to offer his explanations. It may seem at first that resolving the disagreement between MacIntyre and Johnson is a difficult prospect; however, this is not the case. My central goal in this paper is to offer an intense exploration and application of MacIntyre and Johnson's philosophies, ending with a resolution between the two that will offer us a new rational alternative to postmodern trends as well as creatively solve the disagreement between MacIntyre and Johnson.

MacIntyre's theories of the relation between morality and tradition and rationality were quite unique when they arrived on the scene, and remain foundational for other philosophers who seek to advocate the same ideas in some slightly different form. Much of his general approach will be apparent in the discussion of Johnson's philosophy later on, but even at the risk of overstating certain of his key principles, I would now like to provide a comprehensive overview of MacIntyre's thought and method. His concern in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* deals mostly with the issue of whose account of rationality and justice (Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Hume) is superior while taking into consideration the conception of traditions in which the specific philosophies develop. The ideas in this book are just as valuable to us when we are dealing with two rival personal or cultural traditions, as MacIntyre offers many ways in which rivals can interact and even prove superiority. His earlier book *After Virtue* concerns itself even more with the issue of narrative and its place in moral thought by focusing specifically on the nature of virtue in different moral traditions. By combining the theories set forth in these two books, we will gain a clear understanding of MacIntyre's thought as it applies to this project, and we will see his ideas echoed later when we explore Johnson.

To begin, we should first understand why there is a need for a new moral approach. Enlightenment philosophers, determined to systematize reason as much as possible, set out in their works to prove existence of a universal reason that was independent of human subjectivity and error. The search for truth became the search for the nature of this reason. Certain other assumptions accompanied this philosophy; the mind/body division became important, and people began to see passions and feelings as enemies to reason, which only operated in a cleared mind. This view we know today as modern foundationalism or (as Johnson will term it) absolutism. Philosophy is reduced to a science, where we plug in an input and get an output based on our data. There is not any room for a dimension of human imperfection and incompleteness any longer in the thought process. MacIntyre and Johnson will each explain the problems with this view, but essentially they argue that the difficulty with the Enlightenment theory is that humans are simply incapable of living or thinking outside of any tradition; foundationalism demands a rational purity that we can never exercise.

A second view that MacIntyre combats is emotivism, which is a cousin to relativism. In *After Virtue* he defines it as the belief that "moral judgments, being expressions of attitude or feeling, are neither true nor false; and agreement in moral judgment is not to be secured by any rational method, for there are none" (MacIntyre 11-12). It is simply a

view that our moral decisions are not rational but purely personal matters of taste, related to how we feel about them. The emotivist accuses the objectivist of claiming objectivity for his belief while it is in fact purely subjective. Because of this, the emotivist decides all beliefs expressing ideas of values are subjective, and, having decided that, can believe whatever he wants to. If I was to say "That's wrong!" the emotivist simply takes my statement as being an expression of my personal preferences, carrying no important weight for anyone but myself. He can then take any standpoint he wants to argue from, since evaluative absolutes do not exist. Whatever he feels like at the time is what is moral (MacIntyre 31).

At this point we may be confused as to how emotivism and foundationalism can be related, as they seem so opposite. The foundationalist is bound to rules; the emotivist is bound to none. But there is quite a parallel here that we find. By making reason absolutely pure and devoid of emotion or passion, the foundationalist has removed reason from any sense of tradition; it is as if reason has said "I Am" and no longer has a narrative history. In the same way, the emotivist has no reason but only feeling, which is always in the present. By creating a moveable self not situated in any tradition for context, the emotivist has also effectively removed himself and his reason from any particular tradition. Essentially this position is a rebellion against the Enlightenment objectivism. The two rival but related philosophies both fail to realize the importance of tradition, and thus provide us with an insufficient understanding of reason and morality. There must be a better way, and MacIntyre wants to find it.

To best understand MacIntyre's philosophy, we should first be clear on what his concept of truth is. We know it will not be the Enlightenment version of objective truth with which we are familiar. What is it, then, to claim something as true? Here is what he offers from *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*:

To claim something as truth for one's present mindset and the judgments which are
its expression is to claim that this kind of inadequacy, this kind of discrepancy [between
the way we judge the world and how it really is], will never appear in any future
situation The test for truth in the present, therefore, is always to summon up
as
many questions and as many objections of the greatest strength possible; what can
be
justifiably claimed as true is what has sufficiently withstood such dialectical
questioning
and framing of objections. (MacIntyre 358)

Most simply put, claiming truth is stating that your beliefs stand up against tests put to them and accurately describe "how the world is." In other words, a true belief is one that does in fact precisely describe the reality of the world; it will always be able to do so. Even so, we cannot relate to or experience truth except through a tradition; there is no abstract Cartesian deduction possible. We will be able to understand the exact nature of the definition more clearly once we learn how narrative, morality, and rival traditions interact to test values and to keep the ones that pass. An important thing to note here is that MacIntyre is not suggesting either that traditions possess absolute truths or that truth can never be possessed by a tradition. He is unequivocally positing an independent truth that does in fact exist. The difference between him and, say, Kant is that MacIntyre does not think we achieve an understanding of truth simply through "pure reason." Our rationality is always tradition-situated. Because of this, truth becomes an ideal to which we strive but understand our own limitations in the process. However, even through tradition-situated rationality we can still come to understand truth. These ideas will continue to recur and be emphasized in the further discussion.

The importance of narrative becomes most clear when we understand that we must treat a human life as a whole, not as something made up of different components or something that can be analyzed "atomistically," as MacIntyre puts it in *After Virtue*. He gives the example of how different traits are different virtues for different people (gambler vs. good administrator), or how one person can exhibit the same virtue in two different situations (MacIntyre 191). As he says, "the unity of a virtue in someone's life is intelligible only as a characteristic of a unitary life . . . that can be conceived and evaluated as a whole" (Ibid). Yet this unity of a human life is dependent on understanding a human narrative. For example, MacIntyre sets the scene of a man who is working in a garden. Observers may ask answer the question 'What is he doing?' by saying anything ranging from 'Gardening' to 'Taking exercise' to 'Pleasing his wife' (MacIntyre 192). To completely understand his behavior and provide the correct answer, we must first understand the setting in which he is doing this. If he is just doing garden chores and incidentally pleasing his wife, we have one scenario; if he is pleasing his wife by taking exercise on the side while gardening incidentally, we have another (Ibid). This particular setting is situated in a larger setting of marital relationship that is situated in the larger setting of those relationships in general or, perhaps, in their life in general (Ibid). The list of settings can be endless, but each gives a new dimension to the one which it surrounds and lends a complete understanding of why each specific action is undertaken.

MacIntyre does not mean to restrict the idea of a setting to only an isolated "scene." He includes the idea of a

practice, or it may be a milieu of some other human kind. But it is central to the notion

of a setting . . . that a setting has a history . . . within which the histories of individual

agents . . . have to be situated, just because without the setting and its changes through

time the history of the individual agent and his changes through time will be unintelligible.

(Ibid)

A practice is the idea of an action or some set of actions that derive meaning from the tradition in which they are situated and are set in motion in order to attain an end that is intrinsically valuable. Without some way to order motives in a historical sense, we will never be able to understand the reason behind the decision or the practice. There must be a context for action, and the only context is a narrative one. People as individuals have their own narrative situated inside some larger cultural or historical narrative. It is impossible to understand actions outside of a narrative and to prove this MacIntyre offers yet another example. Suppose a man suddenly turns to you one day and says the scientific name of the common wild duck. You know what he meant, but you do not know what his motivation for the action was. If you knew that he was uttering a code word or acting on advice about how to combat shyness, you would have some sort of narrative in which to situate and understand this particular action (MacIntyre 195). Then you would be able to understand and react appropriately.

We are now in a better position to see the fallacies of foundationalism/objectivism and emotivism now. Each one wants to situate reason and action outside of a narrative. But a narrative setting is the only way to fully explain thought and actions and motivations. I can only explain my morality and my rationality by pointing to my own narrative setting situated in larger and larger settings. If I was to forget my historical past, I would have no way to explain my position in the present without resorting to a technique devoid of understanding of tradition and therefore incomplete.

Perhaps we are convinced by MacIntyre's insistence on the importance of narrative to situate morality and rationality. However, this is not enough. We also need some way to compare two rival historically situated traditions and decide if one can be superior to the other. MacIntyre has a method to do this based on dialectical resourcefulness, epistemological crises, and three criteria for moral progress. Now we will turn to these issues and discover practical applications of this philosophy.

So far in MacIntyre's discussion, we have come to grips with the fact that as humans situated in a particular narrative and historical setting, we are not capable of saying that our tradition encompasses universal, absolute reason. By acknowledging such truth, however, it seems as if we are drifting dangerously close to the (as MacIntyre sees them) treacherous waters of relativism or perspectivism, which are each incapable of instituting a system in which traditions can intelligibly relate somehow. Additionally, both of these ideologies are unacceptable since they cannot even locate themselves inside a tradition. Luckily there is a way in his method that prevents us from falling into those philosophical traps: the problem of an epistemological crisis and its solution. An epistemological crisis

in a tradition occurs when it ceases to make any forward "rational progress," as MacIntyre calls it in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. The criterion of failure in rational progress is this: the methods of the tradition are leading to impotency in the new rational beliefs department. To escape this stalemate, the faltering tradition needs to find "new concepts and . . . some new type or types of theory which meet three highly exacting requirements" (MacIntyre 362). We can now look at what these three requirements for rational (and moral) progress are.

The initial requirement for superiority is that the tradition from which the faltering one is borrowing must be able to offer a way out of the crisis. The new tradition has to offer consistent solutions for each problem that was contributing to the crisis. Secondly, it must be able to explain why the other tradition was in crisis. In doing so, the new tradition will prove to understand the narrative history of the other tradition well enough to point out what went wrong. This ability is like being able to fluently speak another language; when you can translate the rationality of another tradition and then solve its problems, yours is definitely the superior tradition. Finally, "these first two tasks must be carried out in a way which exhibits some fundamental continuity of the new conceptual and theoretical structures with the shared beliefs in terms of which the tradition of enquiry had been defined up to this point" (Ibid). In other words, there must be a recognizable relationship between both of the traditions. Otherwise, it will be impossible for the inhabitants of one to understand the inhabitants of the other, and communication will fail. We cannot situate ourselves in an entirely new tradition; it must be familiar in some way.

The question of how such a solution escapes both relativism and perspectivism can now be asked, and answered. Part of a relativist's assertion is the existence of multiple traditions; the problem is that those traditions cannot and should not interact or be evaluated against each other. Rationality is tradition-dependent, so each tradition is equally rational according to itself. MacIntyre, while recognizing traditions, believes that they can be evaluated using his three-step method. In fact, there are times when traditions should be evaluated against each other, such as times when one tradition begins to fail to allow the adherent to form beliefs. In such a case, we can borrow from related traditions to create a new and better way of understanding truth and dealing with the world. The relativist cannot allow such inter-tradition interactions.

We escape the charge of perspectivism in a slightly different way. The perspectivist believes that we operate from our own perspective on the world, and no one perspective is more meaningful than another. We just have different ways of looking at the same things; there is no objective reality existing anywhere in any form. MacIntyre again would understand where this idea arises from. A tradition is like a perspective in that it is situated. But one tradition can be composed of several combined perspectives, and different situated traditions can still communicate with each other. In addition, we can indeed find traditions that are not more meaningful but more rational and truth-conducive. We do not have to say that all views are equal; we can find ones that are better and more truthful than others.

MacIntyre, through these techniques, offers us a way to pursue rational and moral understanding that is much more complex than any understanding that objectivism or emotivism has to offer. It is essentially a creative process; he says that "Imaginative conceptual innovation will have had to occur" (Ibid). This does not mean that we are making anything up; on the contrary, we are using all our resources to seek for the tradition that is most true. We will never exist in a tradition that has a grasp of universal reason or truth, but our goal is to continue to try to discover some "thesis [which] is true not only . . . for all possible times and places" but also a thesis that, when adopted by the mind, "expresses its thought . . . adequate to its object" (MacIntyre 363). Through our dialectical resourcefulness we can continue on this quest for rationality and morality. At this point we will now turn attention to Johnson and his brand of philosophy that is very closely related to MacIntyre.

Offering yet another moral theory, Johnson sets out a system based on imaginative thought and creative abilities. At the center of his moral theories lie the concept of moral imagination, the philosophy meant to replace relativism and absolutism. Part of the shortcomings of both relativism and absolutism lie in their dependence on the Moral Law Folk Theory, that is the generalized account of what the western tradition (religious or secular) takes reason and morality to be. To provide a clear introduction to Johnson's thought, I would like first to delve into his specific reasons for rejecting relativism and absolutism, and also to examine their relation to the Moral Law Folk Theory. Once that foundation is laid down we can turn our attention to his more substantial ideas of metaphorical resourcefulness, the importance of narrative, and how moral imagination works. Finally we will look at how moral and rational progress occur in a tradition and how two rival ones can relate to each other in Johnson's system.

To understand where Johnson is going, we must first understand his initial beginning point. The Moral Law Folk Theory is less complicated than the name suggests. It is the general western account of reason and morality and, whether we were raised in a religious or secular environment, we will recognize it as the common idea in our society. I will not quote his generalization in full, but here are some excerpts to articulate our common theory:

Human beings have a dual nature, part bodily and part mental. It is our capacity to reason and to act upon rational principles that distinguishes us from brute animals Therefore, our freedom is preserved only in acting on principles our reason gives to us.

There is a deep tension between our bodily and mental aspects, because our bodily passions

and desires are not inherently rational

Reason guides the will by giving it moral laws . . . that specify which acts are morally prohibited, which are required, and which are permissible Moral reasoning is thus

principally a matter of getting the correct description of a situation, determining which moral

law pertains to it, and figuring out what action that moral law requires for that given situation. (Johnson 7)

Essentially, this is the structure for reason and morality that most of us westerners believe at some level. We have an idea of some universally true moral law, that we can comprehend using reason as a tool; then we apply the moral law based on how we classify the situation in question and so we have a neat set of guidelines by which we as a culture operate.

The ideas in the Moral Law Folk Theory create the two modern versions with which we are familiar: relativism and absolutism. Both of these opposites rely on the same fallacious claim; namely, that there are "absolute and objective moral laws [which] come from the essential structure of a Universal Reason that is supposedly shared by all moral agents" (Johnson 218). Relativism relies on this idea insofar as it opposes it. Yes, they say, if objectivity did in fact exist it would exist in such a form as explained above. Their objection is that there is nothing that all cultures have in common, so there is no objectivity. Another form of relativism, that is less extreme, sees moral traditions as ambiguously different and unrelated with no way to dialogue with each other. Although they may find a small place for imagination, they do not consider it a rational process by which to create morality, and so once again borrow from the same theory which an absolutist borrows from (Johnson 219).

Absolutists, on the other hand, espouse the notion of objectivity as possible. The way in which we achieve such an approach is by clearing our mind of all biases and passions (which are, from the Moral Law Folk Theory, enemies to reason) and seeking truth with a perfectly clear mind. This method was the one offered by Enlightenment philosophers, who sought to find a way to make reason like a science, devoid of gray areas and ambiguities. In such a system absolute truth becomes the bedrock of reason and morality, and our moral decisions must be made in light of such absolute objectivity.

The problem with both systems (and especially so with absolutism), says Johnson, is that they fail to acknowledge that humans do not make decisions in a world with clear-cut edges. Rather, we are "fallible, finite, and frail creatures living within evolving communities who are forced to make decisions by [our] best lights within what are typically highly ambiguous value-laden contexts" (Johnson 223). We do not operate with fixed ideas and values; they change. There must be a way in which to understand our moral traditions without relying on an objective, rational scale that lies entirely outside of any tradition. At this point we need a theory that can understand both the changes and growth of people as well as the changes and growth of their morality and reason, and how the two are inseparable. Now we turn to Johnson's answer: moral imagination.

In order to know why I act the way I do, you would want to take into consideration my motivations. To understand those, you would have to know something of my story and

how I have evolved into who I am today. We have already seen MacIntyre explain why narrative and morality are so entwined, and Johnson follows this line of thinking. He writes:

In sharp contrast, the nonobjectivist, or experientialist view (as I shall call it), regards the person as a self-in-process. A person is never merely the brute physical organism of the body, nor is the person a metaphysically distinct spiritual substance utterly independent of, yet lodged in, the body. Rather, we exist as complex, self-transforming biological organisms in interaction with our physical, interpersonal, and cultural environments We inhabit this world both as beings who are constituted by sedimented cultural practices, institutions, and meanings, but also as constituting beings who can gradually transform dimensions of these preexistent, inherited structures of meaning and action. (Johnson 161)

We are shaped by, just as we shape. Even in rebelling against our 'role' in society and shaping a new one, we are still shaped in our rebellion by the hated 'role'. Such actions and reactions constitute both our decisions in life and the ways in which we understand our selves. This connection means that "a person's identity as a moral agent is inextricably tied up with her quest for synthetic unity in her life" (Johnson 163). Just as we look back over a story to understand why the protagonist arrives at the end at which he arrives, so we look back over our lives to understand who we are and why we make certain decisions. In such a way narrative is essential to our understanding of ourselves and our morality.

We cannot abstract our behavior from our narrative; in other words, we cannot objectify it in the Enlightenment sense as purely rational, independent of experience or tradition. Johnson gives the example of turning on a light switch. We could be turning it on in several different contexts, whether to surprise an unfaithful lover, to light up a dark workbench, or because we are bored (Johnson 174). The specific meaning of what it is to flip the switch only becomes clear in such a narrative context. We can see in this small example that the action and the setting depend on each other for explanation and understanding. In such a way we must look at our narrative to understand our actions in their setting, and to understand that setting in the larger and larger ones in which it occurs.

The person skeptical of historical tradition and its importance may wonder why this idea of a narrative setting is necessary. I offer Johnson's idea about what we ultimately want to accomplish with narrative understanding of our lives.

We are struggling in the immediate present to make our situation more meaningful

and manageable, to unburden ourselves of our felt confusion and lack of clarity. To do this,

we have available a host of resources: ideals, people we regard as morally exemplary, cultural myths, stories of moral conflict and resolution, principles, and our sense of history. We are

not seeking only to make our lives more 'meaningful' Instead, we are trying to do the

best available thing in our given situation. Some things we propose to do will, in fact, be

worse, or less satisfactory, than others in this instance. Figuring out what these better things

are is not typically a process of bringing cases under fixed, context-free rules. Much of the time

we have to be more sensitive and subtle and reflective than that. (Johnson 180-1)

As he stated before, we are not people who live in an purely rational world. We come upon situations that do not fit neatly into the categories provided by the Moral Law Folk Theory. When confronted with such situations, we want to create as much meaning as possible that is consistent with the direction we want our narrative to go. Moral decisions are based on such impulses.

There are certain tools that we have available when attempting to decide difficult moral issues. Our greatest tool is the metaphorical language that we have developed in our tradition. For example, we understand actions metaphorically as part of a larger scale idea. Johnson calls this the *STORIES ARE JOURNEYS* metaphor. When we speak of the traveler in the journey, we also mean the same thing as when we speak of the protagonist in a story or of a moving object in terms of spatial movement. In the same metaphor, we speak of difficulties in a journey as we speak of difficulties in a story or of obstacles in terms of spatial movement (Johnson 169). In this particular metaphorical schema, we have the story metaphor, the journey metaphor, and the spatial movement metaphor all acting together as complements. Using one to describe the other lends clarity to the situation.

How does this apply to our narratives? If we run up against a difficulty, we can think of the journey metaphor and imagine it as a difficulty in a journey. Or we can think of it in terms of the spatial movement metaphor and think of it as an obstacle in our path. Our job, then, is to figure out how to remove the obstacle in order that we (the traveler) may continue moving onwards. These concepts are not only metaphors, but themes of our lives. When we remove the obstacle, we can continue on our journey and continue creating our narrative. There are countless of these schemas that cover myriad experiences in our narratives. When we understand how these metaphors and concepts relate to each other, we achieve a better understanding of the forces at play in our lives and how we can best deal with and relate to them.

A final tool for deciding difficult moral issues is our moral imagination. Johnson takes this ability to be the central one which most of us as a culture lack, due to our obsession with Enlightenment objectivity. Let me first define what moral imagination is and is not, and then how it can be applied to our moral and narrative situations. We saw earlier in the discussion of problems with the Moral Law Folk Theory how the idea of objectivity as the ideal is rooted in our cultural consciousness. Imagination initially seems antithetical to reason, then, because we think of reason as fixed and 'universal.' But, as we have also seen in our discussion of narrative both in Johnson and MacIntyre, we do not make decisions based on absolutes. Our narrative self, and consequently our moral self, is constantly evolving. Because of this we want our moral decisions to help create a narrative that we, in part, can shape as we will. This is where moral imagination enters.

Moral imagination is not a simple act of imagining some arbitrary solution to a moral problem. Nor is it a mere exercise of our creative abilities that bears no concrete relation to anything substantial. It is the understanding of how our morality works, how it can apply and what the outcomes may be, and the ability to creatively decide how best to work through a moral problem for which the Moral Law Folk Theory gives insufficient direction. For example, I mentioned just previously that there are different metaphorical schemas that underlie our concepts of morality. By manipulating these metaphors and their relationships, we create, through moral imagination, a new way in which to approach a problem, or give ourselves a better, more complete understanding of a situation. This imaginative understanding of our own metaphors can help us better understand the metaphors of others as well, and so deal with traditions different than our own.

Another facet of moral imagination is that it reflects our desire to understand and learn from narrative. Johnson quotes Richard Rorty as saying that people who wish to learn about moral self-development read not philosophy but novels or plays or stories (Johnson 196). We do this because we ourselves are living out narratives, and so we can understand moral dilemmas better when they are presented in such a format. By reading narrative and reflecting on our own, we gain a great base of understanding. Using my moral imagination, I can hypothesize as to what may happen if I decide one way or another. Such imagination can be based on fictional narratives or my own narrative. Either way, it provides me with a tool for predicting how things will turn out based on different courses of action, and therefore which course of action I should choose.

Fundamentally, moral imagination works out of our narrative moral tradition, not on its own. But it includes the ability to evaluate other traditions as well once we grasp that other great imaginative tool: moral metaphors. We are not moving away from absolutes and starting to drift aimlessly on a sea of ambiguity. Rather, we are cultivating the ability to understand our moral decisions in a creative manner: where the decisions come from and how they can and will affect our lives. We are not purely objective beings; our decisions are not objective in a pure sense. But we can be objective when we use imagination to realize our narrative past and to understand where our narrative future should be going. This new objectivity, one that is situated in our tradition yet can still grow and evolve with us, is the best way for us to meet moral challenges and to carry on our lives and create our narratives.

Now we are at a point where we understand the theory Johnson is advocating. To make his position complete, however, we must finally deal with the issue of how one tradition can prove superiority over another and in doing so create moral progress. To deal with this question, Johnson mainly relies on MacIntyre, who I will recap only briefly here. First of all, we must realize that any tradition is just that—a tradition—and is operating based on its own biases and narrative history. Each tradition, therefore, will have its own interests and values in mind. But this does not mean that two traditions cannot relate to each other in any rational way. As MacIntyre has said earlier, one tradition can illuminate problems in another if it satisfies three conditions of progress: identifying a crisis in the competing tradition and offering a working solution, explaining why the competing tradition could not solve the crisis, being somehow continuous with the competing tradition so that there is an obvious relation (Johnson 234). Johnson agrees with MacIntyre's criteria for rational progress, endorsing them in his own arguments. He does go on to specifically emphasize the fact that such progress occurs only from the point of view of a tradition, however. The emphasis of this position is important for him because he disagrees with MacIntyre's belief that "the only way to stabilize criteria of reason is via a shared commitment to authority" (Johnson 236). What he is referring to is MacIntyre's preferences for an Augustinian/Thomistic tradition, due to the fact he believes that tradition to have the best rational understanding of how the world (including God) actually is. MacIntyre takes that rational understanding of authority to be something that is true in the tradition-experienced sense that is the only way we have to experience truth. He operates in his evaluations of other traditions from this position, one which Johnson does not take as true. Johnson wants to emphasize that MacIntyre is still only preferring his view from inside a tradition and cannot posit such an absolute criterion. His understanding of the approach to truth hinges on the imperfect completeness and creativity of a view brought about through transperspectivity, an idea borrowed from Nietzsche.

This fundamental disagreement between MacIntyre and Johnson will lead to their final debate (which I will deal with later on) about objectivity and how we are to approach moral traditions and their superiorities. At issue here are dialectical and metaphorical resourcefulness; how are we to see the world and so to see traditions? But I would now like to turn our attention to two philosophers who offer supreme examples of narrative moral philosophy and tradition: Augustine and Nietzsche. Like MacIntyre and Johnson,

the issue of the nature of truth and reality is in debate between their respective philosophies. In addition, each philosopher offers his theories through narrative based on historical tradition, both personal and cultural. Using the tools and methods we have learned from MacIntyre and Johnson, I would now like to turn for a while to an evaluation of these excellent narrative philosophies, attempting to discover if it is possible to find one superior to the other based on the criteria we have been given.

Even when we are not armed with the arsenal of philosophical tools that MacIntyre and Johnson provide, it is an easy task to delve into the personal narrative that Augustine gives us in his *Confessions*. In looking at this book, I want to first see what Augustine is advocating as moral, and then why (based on his narrative and setting). By doing so, we will fulfill our philosophers' criterion that we can only understand a tradition's morality by understanding its narrative. In this case we are speaking of a personal narrative tradition, but that makes no difference to the overall concepts addressed.

The simplest way to characterize moral progress in *Confessions* is to say that any action that brings our hearts into closer union with and love for God is right, while any action that pushes us away from Him is wrong. We can best see this by looking at some of Augustine's commentaries on his actions. As a child, he loved to hear emotional stories about Dido or the exploits of the gods. This, he says, was wrong. He writes: ". . . in this lay my sin: that I sought pleasure, nobility, and truth not in God but in the beings He had created Thus I fell into sorrow and confusion and error" (I.xx). Later on as a teenager, he steals some pears; he has no intention to eat them, but committed the crime merely because "Our only pleasure in doing it was that it was forbidden" (II.iv). When he moves to Carthage at the age of eighteen, his "one delight was to love and to be loved" (II.ii). Because of this he takes a mistress and presumably has lots of premarital sex due to his lust and desire for love. As he tells us in other places, though, he was not satisfied with his life; something was empty and void.

If it is wrong to turn away from God for satisfaction, it is right to turn towards Him; so goes Augustine's moral belief. Just as we saw above that actions undertaken for derivation of pleasure from sources other than God are wrong, we can also see that actions involving turning to God are right. In the *Confessions*, however, there are not many actions that Augustine interprets as turnings to God. There are instead many awakenings or revelations brought on by different books, speakers, or situations. One of these awakenings occurred when he read Cicero's *Hortensius* for the first time. He writes: "How then did I burn, my God, how then did I burn to wing upwards from earthly delights to You" (III.iv). Later on in his life, before his conversion to Christianity, Augustine gains great respect for Ambrose, Bishop of Milan. Ambrose's words bring another subtle change to Augustine. As he says, "along with the words, which I admired, there also came into my mind the subject matter, to which I attached no importance. I could not separate them" (V.xiv). The subject matter, of course, was God. At these points in his life, and at other points that I have not mentioned, Augustine does for a time change his focus slightly. He fails to change it fully until his conversion, of course, but the emphasis is that his shift in priority is a movement in the right direction.

In Augustine's philosophy, as in most philosophies, it is easy to see from our privileged vantage point what is right and wrong. It was not so simple for Augustine to decide this, and in that lies the essence of his book. The more difficult and substantial task is to discover why what is right and wrong is so, and how these judgments are situated in a tradition. The Confessions is a work that begs to be explored in this way, as it is set up as a narrative whose subject is also its author. After our very brief look at morality from Augustine's view, I want to spend more time looking at the motives behind the ideas; I want to put them into a setting, as we have learned. When we read the Confessions this way, I think we will discover why MacIntyre's and Johnson's systems work so well as opposed to their rivals.

Our narrative setting for the Confessions is nothing more than the obvious: the life of Augustine. But his language of morality in this book is very different from the rather dry rules of a Ten Commandments style work or even of something less pedantic, such as Kant or Mill. Why the difference? Augustine's life, as we will see, is one of a constant quest for fulfillment and peace. In the first section of the book we find the theme of the entire work articulated for us.

And man desires to praise Thee this tiny part of all that Thou hast created desires

to praise Thee Thou dost so excite him that to praise Thee is his joy. For Thou

hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee. (I.i)

The final sentence of that quote encompasses the ideas of the book. Immediately, we can understand that the Confessions was never meant to serve as a directive, and that Augustine never set out in his life or in his book to explain the nature of rationality and morality in the same way that Kant's ethical philosophies are meant to. Instead, his emptiness motivated him to search for something to fill it; only along the way did he begin to discover truth.

As a teenager in Carthage Augustine loved spectacles. He yearned to be made sad by plays he went to see because it pleased him in a perverse way. Again we see the language of fulfillment used, which is the principle language of the Confessions. The impression that Cicero's Hortensius made on him when he read it caused him to yearn for other things, however. Something in his soul is not sated.

The book excited and inflamed me; in my ardour the only thing I found lacking was that

the name of Christ was not there. For with my mother's milk my infant heart had drunk

in, and still held down deep in it, that name according to your mercy, O Lord, the name of

Your Son, my Saviour; and whatever lacked that name, no matter how learned and excellently written and true, could not win me wholly. (III.iv)

This small awakening brought about by Cicero's words stirs the desire in Augustine's heart for the Divine. The problem for Augustine is that he still has not fully realized that the Divine is actually what he needs to seek. Even this exposure to the very thing he needs for fulfillment is not enough to convince him to take it. Once again he heads off in the wrong direction, turning to the Manichees for spiritual guidance. Predictably, he becomes disillusioned with their philosophy as he is unable to reconcile their beliefs with what he knows to be true through science. His dilemma here is an example of one of MacIntyre's epistemological crises; the tradition he is in fails to continue to bring rational progress. It is time for Augustine to seek something new that can explain the failure of the Manichees.

Ending up in Rome after some traveling and teaching, Augustine befriends Ambrose, the Bishop of Milan mentioned earlier. By listening to his words Augustine is drawn once again towards, but not to, God. As he writes, "All unknowing I was brought by God to him [Ambrose], that knowing I should be brought by him to God" (V.xiii). Despite the inexorable draw to do so, Augustine still refuses to embrace God in His fullness. "I held back my heart from accepting anything, fearing that I might fall once more, whereas in fact the hanging in suspense was more deadly. I wanted to be as certain of things unseen as that seven and three make ten" (VI.iv). On further meditation, however, he realizes that he often believes things he cannot see, and he grows to appreciate instead of ridicule the Scriptures. He finally recognizes that "men had not the strength to discover the truth by pure reason" (VI.v).

By this time we would expect Augustine to have fully turned to God for solace and peace. But he has not. Instead, he sends away his mistress of fifteen years, gets engaged to a young girl, and immediately takes another mistress. Even some of his friends express amazement at the hold that lust has on him. Life becomes miserable and constantly disturbing.

O, tortuous ways! Woe to my soul with its rash hope of finding something better if

it forsook Thee! My soul turned and turned again, on back and sides and belly, and

the bed was always hard. For Thou alone art her rest. And behold Thou art close at

hand to deliver us from the wretchedness of error and establish us in Thy way, and

console us with Thy word: "Run, I shall bear you up and bring you and carry you to

the end." (VI.xvi)

Once again, turning away from God creates an unbearable chaos. Over and over again we see all the same words in this overarching language of fulfillment. We can tell that Augustine recognizes what he needs to do to find peace. Yet he still refuses, now because of difficulties with certain doctrines he does not understand. After reading some of the Platonists' writings, however, the concept of a non-corporeal being became clear to him, and he was able to finally accept that teaching of the Scriptures.

Finally Augustine can take no more. Battling the forces of lust inside him, struggling with painful self-realization, he walks out into a garden weeping and lies down under a tree. As he cries he asks himself "How long, how long shall I go on saying tomorrow and again tomorrow? Why not now, why not have an end to my uncleanness this very hour?" (VIII.xii). At that moment he hears a child chanting "Take and read, take and read."

So I was moved to return to the place where Alypius was sitting, for I had put down

the Apostle's book there when I arose. I snatched it up, opened it and in silence read

the passage upon which my eyes first fell: Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy, but put on the Lord Jesus

Christ and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences. I had no wish to read further, and no need. For in that instant, with the very ending of the sentence, it

was as though a light of utter confidence shone in all my heart, and all the darkness of

uncertainty vanished away. (VIII.xii)

At long last Augustine accepts the love of God that he has so long known to be the only peace he can have. His personal narrative is certainly not over, but it has entered a new tradition, close to the old one he followed, but different enough to create an escape from the deadness and lack of progress Augustine felt in his previous beliefs. His conversion comes about through many encounters with crises in his other beliefs, and finally he has found the way to solve them all.

MacIntyre's and Johnson's interpretations flow easily from such an excellent example of narrative. First of all, as I said earlier, moral actions in this tradition (Augustine's new one from the point of view of which he writes the book) are ones that involve a turning to God. Immoral actions are a turning away to seek pleasure from creation instead of God (for clarification, it is only when nature is our primary love that pleasure from nature is a problem). Such an ethic seems simple. Now we can see its causes. Augustine's life up to the point of his conversion has been a quest for peace. As he looks back on his life, he can see that many of his actions and philosophies provided no peace; he can also see why. Each action, when situated in this new setting, becomes understandable as either a turning toward or a turning away.

We can also explain Augustine's morality by looking at the larger tradition from whence he comes. His mother Monica, as we know from the book, is a devout Catholic. Her husband is not, and neither is Augustine. As a child he watches her pray for his father as well as many other causes. As a young man he watches her pray for him and bring herself to tears over his depraved state. As an older man he watches her praise God for his conversion, and sees her piety and grace. Augustine has said in an earlier quote that he had drunk in the name of Jesus with his mother's milk. Situating his life in this larger setting, it is possible to give meaning to his quest for truth. He has always felt an acute need for the presence of God in his life, a need that was taught to him as a child. Certainly his turning away from the acknowledgment of that need brought chaos into his life, and was therefore futile and wrong in its desire for substitution. Looked at in this setting, his quest is moral in itself due to Catholic beliefs and his upbringing.

The Confessions are a fairly straightforward example of how narrative is situated in a historical setting and how we can best understand rationality and morality when examining a historical narrative. Augustine's life has proved to him what is wrong and right, and he only needs to reexamine his narrative if he is ever in doubt. As we turn to Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, however, we must grapple with quite a different text. Not only is the subject of the narrative a fictional figure, but he is also interpreted by some such as Carl Jung to be Nietzsche himself. This lends the possibility of confusion in interpreting. In looking at this work, I want to focus mainly on how the book can be situated in Nietzsche's own narrative and also how he uses *Zarathustra* to create new answers to difficult dilemmas and ultimately come up with an improved tradition that solves the crises he had to deal with.

As with our analysis of the Confessions, I would like to begin with *Zarathustra* by examining the moral teachings and then moving on to how they are situated in certain settings. In *Zarathustra*, morality hinges on creation of values first and foremost. There are three steps in the progression to creation of values. *Zarathustra* calls them the "three metamorphoses of the spirit" (Nietzsche 25). In the beginning the spirit is like a camel. It wants to bear all of the most difficult things such as "feeding on the acorns and grass of knowledge and, for the sake of truth, suffering hunger in one's soul" (Nietzsche 26). The second metamorphosis of the spirit changes the camel into a lion who wants to "conquer his own freedom and be master in his own desert" (Ibid). The lion must combat the dragon of values called "Thou shalt". Nietzsche writes:

"Thou shalt" lies in his way, sparkling like gold, an animal covered with scales;
and

on every scale shines a golden "thou shalt".

Values, thousands of years old, shine on these scales; and thus speaks the
mightiest of all dragons: "All value of all things shines on me. All value has long
been

created, and I am all created value. Verily, there shall be no more 'I will.'" Thus
speaks

the dragon. (Nietzsche 27)

The lion speaks "I will" to the dragon's "Thou shalt". This is the creation of new values. But Nietzsche says that even the lion cannot create new values; he can only create freedom. In order to actually create new values, the third metamorphosis of the spirit is needed. Finally the lion becomes a child, for only the child "is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes'" (Nietzsche 27). Such an achievement as the self-creation of values is one of the highest levels of Zarathustra's morality that we can strive for; the right thing to do is create the right thing to do.

The evil in Zarathustra's world is the spirit of gravity. Represented by a creature which is "half dwarf, half mole, lame" and who sits on Zarathustra's shoulder, it is the archenemy of the creative spirit. This dwarf whispers "O Zarathustra, you philosopher's stone, you slingstone, you star-crusher! You threw yourself up so high; but every stone that is thrown must fall" (Nietzsche 156). The evil of the spirit of gravity comes from its hatred of creativity. It seeks to impose a meaningless meaning of life upon us. Zarathustra speaks:

He who will one day teach men to fly will have moved all boundary stones;

the boundary stones themselves will fly up into the air before him, and he will
rebaptize

the earth - "the light one."

The ostrich runs faster than the fastest horse, but even he buries his head gravely
in the grave earth; even so, the man who has not learned to fly. Earth and life
seem grave

to him; and thus the spirit of gravity wants it. But whoever would become light
and a bird

must love himself: thus I teach.

We are presented with grave words and values almost from the cradle: "good" and

"evil" this gift is called. For its sake we are forgiven for living. (Nietzsche 193)

Recall the dragon with the shining scales in the earlier passage. The moral language, the metaphors, of Zarathustra's teaching are not ones of fulfillment but ones of heaviness and lightness: the heaviness of morality versus the lightness of individual creativity. This creativity defeats the spirit of gravity once and for all.

Man is hard to discover - hardest of all for himself: often the spirit lies about

the soul. Thus the spirit of gravity orders it. He, however, has discovered himself who

says, "This is my good and evil"; with that he has reduced to silence the mole and dwarf

who say, "Good for all, evil for all."

"This is my way; where is yours?"-thus I answered those who asked me "the way."

For the way-that does not exist.

Thus spoke Zarathustra. (Nietzsche 194-5)

Ultimately our creativity will lead us to redemption which, in Zarathustra's morality, comes when we can accept the "abysmal thought" of eternal recurrence: that everything which has happened will happen again. If this is so, we must will to accept and take joy in every action of ours. Instead of applying imposed values onto our lives, we create our own in order to exercise our will and be able to say "I love life" without qualification. This ability redeems us from the spirit of gravity and is the highest aspiration of Zarathustra. It is not until he achieves this state of mind that he ends his "going under" and achieves a union with Life.

Zarathustra's morality is a stranger one than Augustine's; we are certainly less familiar with the ideas it advocates. The teachings are not as clear either, obscured by Biblical-type stories with dense meanings. By using Johnson's technique of recognizing moral metaphors, however, we can begin to understand the Nietzschean narrative. Heaviness and gravity are bad, and lightness and creativity are good. If there is a parallel with Augustine's idea of turning towards and turning away, Zarathustra would say that turning away and denying Life is evil, while affirming Life (no matter how terrible) is good. A second element of Zarathustra's teaching which we glean more indirectly is that traditional Judeo-Christian morality ("Thou shalt") is fallen into crisis and become

meaningless; it offers no progress and is stale and still. By taking the language of values and equating it with heaviness, Zarathustra makes a new tradition like enough to the older one that we can understand it. Once again, discovering the morals is the easier part. It is time to look at the narrative to determine the setting. Augustine's Confessions was the narrative of his life; since it was an entirely personal work, it was simpler to situate that narrative and the actions and thoughts contained in it. Zarathustra, as said before, is more difficult. It may not be right to read too much of Nietzsche's life into his philosophy, but MacIntyre and Johnson would agree that in order to situate the book and the ideas in it, we must understand both Nietzsche's narrative and the greater historical traditions that he is shaped by and rebels against.

Parts of Nietzsche's biography are known to us as infamous incidents: his embracing the beaten horse immediately prior to his final bout with insanity, his late letters signed as Dionysus, his last words of his last book mentioning Dionysus vs. The Crucified. Nietzsche was a tortured man. To give a good picture, I want to provide a description from Walter Kaufmann's translation of Zarathustra (he quotes here from Stefan Zweig):

No devilish torture is lacking in this dreadful pandemonium of sickness:
headaches,

deafening, hammering headaches, which knock out the reeling Nietzsche for days
and

prostrate him on sofa and bed, stomach cramps with bloody vomiting, migraines,
fevers,

lack of appetite, weariness, hemorrhoids, constipation, chills, night sweat-a
gruesome

circle. In addition, there are his 'three-quarters blind eyes,' which, at the least
exertion, begin immediately to swell and fill with tears and grant the intellectual
worker only 'an hour and

a half of vision a day'. But Nietzsche despises this hygiene of his body and works
at his desk

for ten hours, and for this excess his overheated brain takes revenge with raging
headaches

and a nervous overcharge; at night, when the body has long become weary, it does
not permit

itself to be turned off suddenly, but continues to burrow in visions and ideas until
it is forcibly

knocked out by opiates Never a point of rest in this up and down, never an even stretch

of contentment or a short month full of comfort and self-forgetfulness. (Nietzsche 5)

We need not try to understand any further how physically tortured Nietzsche was for most of his life. But how could a man who despised Christian pity and who hated weakness overcome his physical inadequacies? He could find the strength to will them back again and again, to embrace them as a terrible part of Life, but a part nonetheless. The strength it would take for his soul to will such torture, and to accept it, was the only strength that Nietzsche had. And this strength he had in spades. Raised the son of a Lutheran clergyman, he was exposed from the beginning of life to promises of hope in the otherworldly, of a "better place" with no suffering. Rejecting Christianity as weak because of its promise of such a place and its subsequent denial of life in the present was his only option as well; thus his hatred for imposed values. Forced to be unable to physically create, Nietzsche did indeed create his own values and will his life as he wanted, and in that lay his strength which he in turn advocated in his philosophy.

By situating the teachings of Zarathustra in Nietzsche's own story, we arrive at the narrative setting for his moral and rational thought. We understand the tradition from which Nietzsche wrote and why he had to create the one he did. We understand why the Judeo-Christian tradition held no promise for him and so became crisis-filled and stagnant. This is never to cheapen the emphasis of Nietzsche's thought and to reduce it merely to his psychological response to life devoid of any rational thought. I do want to draw attention to how his thought is situated in his life, however. Only then can we understand the tradition from whence it comes and so reveal to ourselves the motives behind the ideas. Just as in our analysis of Augustine, such revelations make the philosophy much clearer, and also reminds us that no one has a hold on a universal reason. Nietzsche himself said that twice in the quotes above: "the way does not exist". This book and these ideas are his way, and now we can understand them as such.

At this point we have explored the work of four different philosophers without doing a great deal to combine their thoughts in a meaningful way. To begin concluding my paper, I want to start relating all of this back together. First we will look at the parallels in our pairs: MacIntyre/Augustine and Johnson/Nietzsche. Once we understand how these four stand in relation to each other, we can turn to the final debate between MacIntyre and Johnson that I mentioned earlier: dialectical vs. metaphorical resourcefulness. Although it will seem at first that their argument is not resolvable in a meaningful way, we will end up amazed at the beautiful process their very disagreement illustrates, emphasizes, and proves valid. With our path outlined, let us begin our final exploration and resolution.

MacIntyre and Augustine may not seem similar at first glance. However, in the books which I have relied on for this paper but which I have not delved into in full, MacIntyre spends a great deal of time advocating the validity of the Augustinian/Thomistic tradition against traditions offered by the Enlightenment, by Hume, or by Nietzsche and the

genealogists. As mentioned previously, one main reason he takes this position is his belief that that tradition alone has the greatest understanding of the truth with beliefs that are most likely to hold up under scrutiny. The similarity between MacIntyre and Augustine does not come from preference, however, but from method. In the Confessions we recall that Augustine's belief system continued to be modified because it so often fell into crisis and failed to continue creating any meaningful beliefs. Only once he realized what it was his tradition needed to appeal to in order to keep growing did he achieve the satisfaction he sought and the belief system that completed his life. That authority of appeal was God, and Augustine had found the relationship from which to live under and with that authority. MacIntyre also advocates appeal to an authority. We can see in his philosophy the path for a tradition to follow in order for it to keep growing and improving. But improving towards what goal? The goal of being in the correct relationship to and recognition of authority. We recall MacIntyre's definition of truth in a tradition as being something that actually corresponds to how things are. The reasons he rejects other traditions mentioned above is that they fail to correspond to the divine reality of the Augustinian/Thomistic tradition. If a tradition is not moving towards such a goal, MacIntyre would believe it to be in crisis, just as Augustine's tradition was so often in crisis. His belief that truth lies in this recognition of authority is the basis for his dialectical resourcefulness: how best can we find the tradition that leads us to those beliefs about authority and is therefore the most rational? Through his evaluations of Enlightenment and Nietzschean traditions he proves them lacking, and thus he and Augustine emerge as the inhabitants of the most valid and rational tradition.

The relationship between Johnson and Nietzsche is even more markedly obvious and clear. To begin with, there is no appeal to authority that either of these philosophers endorse. Yet neither is there chaos or rampant perspectivism. Just as Nietzsche advocates the creation of values exemplified by the child, so Johnson advocates moral imagination and creativity in our traditions. In Nietzsche's tradition, we must create our own values because ones imposed by traditions claiming objectivity are really only subjective. The only way we can make our life worthy of affirmation is by choosing to affirm what we will through values creation. Similarly, Johnson emphasizes the idea of a narrative and how we use moral imagination to keep on creating a meaningful life and narrative for ourselves. We use our moral creativity to discover solutions to moral problems which will best contribute to our own story; those solutions are not ones that we can necessarily impose on someone else. The other similarity between Johnson and Nietzsche is their common embracing of transperspectivity. This belief is different from perspectivism because the perspectivist recognizes multiplicity of perspectives, and then leaves it at that. The transperspectivist, on the other hand, attempts to look at the world through these different perspectives. I delved into this issue early on, but let me re-emphasize the similarities between Johnson and Nietzsche on this point. Where Johnson's transperspectivism is different from perspectivism is that we still remain grounded in our own tradition, but use our creativity to attempt to understand other perspectives/traditions and incorporate them into our own. This creativity of completeness in perspectives becomes the new objectivity Johnson ultimately advocates.

The lines are now drawn between the allied philosophers, and the final task remains to reach some meaningful resolution between MacIntyre and Johnson. The differences have been argued about already: do we choose a dialectical resourcefulness relying on rational thought or do we choose the metaphorical creative resourcefulness relying on imagination? What the issue boils down to is an understanding of truth. MacIntyre claims that we can experience and understand truth only through a tradition, but it is there to be understood. Johnson believes that holding a transperspectivist view of reality is the way to seek an understanding of truth through our creativity. Surprisingly enough, our decision will not divide the issue as much as we might have expected. Let us recall the similarities between the philosophies which greatly outnumber the disagreements. First of all, we cannot begin to understand morality or rationality apart from the tradition that has formed it. Understanding the narrative helps us understand the motives for decisions made within the tradition, and so we realize where and how biases and preferences arise and do not take such things as purely objective truth; we do not think as Kant did that our personal philosophy encompasses reality perfectly. Of course, what we understand from our tradition is true until proven otherwise through epistemological crises; it is this meaning of truth which we have discovered through this paper. Secondly, understanding morality and rationality in such a way is the only way to understand morality and rationality. Enlightenment-style knowledge of objective truth is a fiction, one that is perpetuated through the philosophies of foundationalism/absolutism and relativism or perspectivism. People make decisions from a tradition; they cannot reason outside of all traditions in order to contact pure reason. Finally, even with a multiplicity of traditions in the world, it is possible to evaluate one against another and have a meaningful way in which to decide superiority of one over another, as long as the three criteria (discussed much earlier) are satisfied. These three essential points are ones that MacIntyre and Johnson are all in agreement upon; in fact, we may recall that Johnson quotes MacIntyre verbatim quite often in order to back up his own very similar ideas.

So we have multiple similarities and a glaring difference. This discrepancy between the two philosophies does appear, but each fundamentally encourages us to understand our own narrative and tradition in order to understand and create a rational method of morality. This fundamental similarity is the key to resolution. The dialectically inclined person will better continue her tradition by seeking to evaluate it rationally against others and discovering which one understands truth to a greater degree. Ignoring the personal narrative would be ignoring her own tradition and attempting to work outside of it. Likewise, the creative individual who can intelligently explore other perspectives while grounded in his own tradition and who can bring back those imaginative insights to continue creating his narrative is also staying true to his own personal narrative and, thus, his larger tradition. Again, ignoring the creative drive in his life would be working outside his own tradition. As MacIntyre and Johnson have constantly emphasized, there are a multiplicity of traditions in the world. They encourage each person to evaluate his or her own traditions in the ways suggested, and to cultivate and continue his or her personal narrative in a way that stays true to the tradition while at the same time seeks truth. Such a statement necessitates that different people must continue their tradition in different ways which still approach the same goal of understanding truth as well as possible. The understanding of each philosopher as to how we can best understand truth

is different: MacIntyre depends on experience and rational thought while Johnson relies on creativity. The important thing is that both men offer truth as able to be understood, although we will approach it differently when working in different traditions. Certainly neither MacIntyre's or Johnson's approach will work for everyone, and rightly so. But their approaches will work for some, and rightly so. In such a way these two men --each working from their own tradition and approaching the same goal -- offer a perfect example in life of what they write about in philosophy. They are the very illustration of their ideas, and so their disagreement only serves to show the truth of their observations and theories in the end. Each one is approaching a similar goal, yet each is working from a different viewpoint. We can see for ourselves how the thought process they each advocate arises from a particular tradition and personal narrative that manifests itself in each philosopher's differences. The existence of that phenomenon, and the meaning of it, are the very things each has been arguing for in his own philosophy.

At this juncture, it is important that we go back and evaluate my new resolution of this disagreement against MacIntyre's position. Bringing in criticism from absolutists or relativists would be a waste of time, as that debate has already been done to death. The present question is much more interesting. I believe that Johnson would heartily approve my solution, as I have essentially blended two slightly different perspectives into a new one, thus exercising my moral and rational creativity. MacIntyre, however, is less excited about creative abilities and more interested in rational pursuits. As we recall from the earlier discussions of his philosophy, we remember his interest in the pursuit of the idea of a shared authority, the approach he finds to be the most rational of all traditions. In light of all this, we should think a little about what he would have to say about my conclusions.

It is difficult, perhaps, to decide what MacIntyre would say to my thoughts. I have certainly recognized the importance of personal narrative set in historical tradition as being essential to moral and rational understanding and development. I have also agreed with the three criteria for rational progress which he explained much earlier. But I do not advocate the explicit rationality of an appeal to some shared authority which MacIntyre believes in; here we differ. Even so, I am not advocating strict transperspectivity as the perfect tradition either. What I have done in my resolution is to leave the particular direction up to the individual, based on the individual's previous personal narrative and the solution which best continues that narrative. The solution may be MacIntyre's approach, or it may be Johnson's. Essentially the goals are identical: the understanding of truth through tradition, narrative, and experience. I am not, however, creating a new tradition by this; I am only offering an intelligent way to incorporate one or the other (or both, if the case may be) into a personal narrative. My particular solution is not one which MacIntyre can really object to; as long as my tradition is not in crisis, it is still rational. His arguments may lie with Johnson. I am not saying anything positive or negative about the specifics of his philosophy but am instead endorsing the generalities. I believe that he can appreciate this, even if he may differ in certain respects. The truth will continue to reveal itself through narrative and tradition, and we cannot expect to contain it perfectly, as both philosophers realize. Our differences may exist, but they are not as divisive as they appear.

We have arrived here through a long and arduous exploration of the nature of rationality and morality, narrative and tradition, and all the many convoluted relationships between the two. Foundationalism, absolutism, relativism, and perspectivism have all been relegated to the realm of useless, fantastical philosophies. In their place we have a new understanding of morality that is inseparable from our own personal narrative stories. What then are we to do now? Happily there is not even a debate from which we must choose sides. The best recourse is to examine ourselves and decide which approach is most true to our own story and which will help continue it in a meaningful, consistent way. Our new understanding of moral and rational thought may at first not sound like a change at all from prevalent trends. But we have liberated ourselves from the false notion of the existence of a purely objective reason that pollutes both spectrums of moral thought in our world today. Since there is no purely objective reason (situated outside of traditions and experience) that we frustrate ourselves attempting to understand, we are charged to be even more self-scrutinizing than before. A new self-understanding and self-honesty is needed now more than ever. Once we can discover where we are coming from, then we can decide where we need to go in our own lives. Such an idea is complex in that it requires great amounts of self-knowledge, but simple in that it is true to the human experience. Adopting this new morality is the best way for us to blossom as people and to exercise our moral thought and imagination to the fullest.

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