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1. Introduction

Readers of a journal devoted to reasoning and argumentation should find a book discussing Alasdair MacIntyre's theories on moral reasoning and arguments very interesting. For over 30 years MacIntyre has been developing a sophisticated yet controversial theory of moral reasoning and argument. It is based on a combination of Aristotle, Thomism and post-modern critiques of liberal individualism and of the secular, moral theories undergirding it. In his many writings over that period, he primarily addresses secular philosophers and social scientists interested in these matters. In this book, he addresses his fellow Catholic scholars but includes updated critiques of the major Western secular moral philosophies of the Enlightenment and modernity: Utilitarianism, Kantianism and Social Contract theories. The main difference between this book and his writings from the 1980s (1984, 1988) is that he now seems open to including natural rights under the medieval Catholic theory of natural law. The book resulted from a request from Cardinal Ratzinger¹ that the University of Notre Dame study the complex is-

¹ Cardinal Ratzinger is now Pope Benedict XVI (as I suspect most, if not all, readers of this journal know). Since almost all the contributors, including MacIntyre, refer to him by

sues in discussions about natural law and natural rights, which MacIntyre dismissed as fictions in *After Virtue* (hereafter AV).

The book has ten chapters. The first and final chapters were written by MacIntyre. Chapter 1, “Intractable Moral Disagreements” introduces the two major themes of the book: why do contemporary moral debates seem so intractable? Can Natural Law resolve these disagreements more rationally than post-Enlightenment modernist moral theories seem able to? The first chapter is followed by articles from eight different scholars from different disciplines united by their commitment to Catholic Christianity who wish to be involved in inter-religious dialogue as well as dialogue with secular philosophers, especially those of Kantian, Utilitarian and Social Contract persuasion. Finally they intend to confront, albeit indirectly, problems posed by moral scepticism raised by the moral disagreements that religious and secular thinkers have engaged in for several centuries. In the final chapter, MacIntyre responds to the eight critics.

2. Overview

I start with chapter one, discuss three of MacIntyre’s critics and his responses to these critics in chapter ten. In chapter one, MacIntyre summarizes the Thomist-Aristotelian theory of moral reasoning, explaining why moral disagreement renders it problematic but does not refute it. Natural law claims to be binding on all humans and accessible by reason. Such claims seem to imply that there should be near universal agreement about ethical claims. However, massive historical and empirical evidence indicate that no such agreement exists. MacIntyre uses Aquinas’s theories regarding practical rationality to explain why this situation does not undermine natural law: failures to arrive at agreement occur, because of a variety of failures in practical rationality.

Practical rationality is based on the first principles of natural law which entails “that good is to be done and evil to be avoided” (p. 5). While this may seem to be a miserable tautology, the list of goods is not. These goods are of

the title and name he had when he proposed the idea behind the book before he became the present Pope, I will follow their example.

three types: goods relevant to our *physical* nature (life, health), our *animal* nature (sex, caring for children) and our *rational* nature (knowledge and social goods). He makes a distinction to explain why there are apparently intractable moral disputes and why such disputes do not refute natural law claims. This distinction is between the primary and secondary precepts of natural law.

MacIntyre makes two points concerning primary precepts. They should not be identified, or confused with, the first principles of natural law (such as the example above: “good is to be done and evil...avoided”). Like first principles, they are known non-inferentially. Secondary precepts are those that help us apply primary precepts to concrete situations. If we agree that promoting peace, mitigating or eliminating poverty, racism, sexism and diseases from the human race are morally virtuous, we still face questions of how best to achieve these goals. This permits, in fact requires, that we reject relativism at the level of primary precepts but recognize its necessity at the secondary level. Primary precepts remain the same in every society, but the forms through which they receive expression do not, and in this sense they can be called “relative” to a society’s needs, resources and its citizens’ abilities.

MacIntyre recognizes, as did Aquinas, that not all humans acknowledge the rational cogency of natural law. For Aquinas this is due to mental defects or disorders in some persons, and in others it is due to selfishness, passion, and bad habits or dispositions. These, however, are rare exceptions. So it would seem that agreement with natural law should be widespread with dissent from it being exceptional. MacIntyre says that facts concerning moral disagreement do not bear out this explanation. He then proceeds to the major types of moral disagreement in the early 21st century.

He defines five types of such seemingly intractable moral disagreements: the inviolability of innocent human life; the relationship of ends and means; human sexuality; honour and loyalty; and Social Justice. He concludes this survey of intractable disputes with a key meta-theoretical point: the contending parties in these disputes appeal to first principles that provide them with justification for their moral claims concerning taking of human life, sexuality and economic justice. Then, however, rational argument gives way to “shrill assertion and counterassertion of incompatible first principles” (p. 11). This leads to one of his most frequently asserted principles, the need

for rational shared deliberation between contending parties to resolve these issues, both theoretical and practical.

After this, MacIntyre outlines some practical precepts of natural law (concerning the wrongness of murder, theft, *inter alia.*) and explains the obstacles to practical rationality as well as the theory of human nature presupposed by natural law. Since the obstacles are mostly due to the latter I will start with it. MacIntyre follows Catholic tradition in describing human nature as being both good (created in the *imago dei*) and bad (the divine image is corrupted by original sin). Because of the former we are able to know good and evil, but because of the latter we are either unable or unwilling to recognize and/or follow natural law. There are three major obstacles to correct reasoning in moral matters: psychological, ideological and logical. The first is due to defects in human nature primarily our egoism and egotism. The former is our propensity (emphasized repeatedly by MacIntyre) to prefer the pursuit of power, pleasure and money to the precepts of natural law. The latter is due to our pride or arrogance. We think that we are right and are unwilling to engage in a genuine dialogue based on shared deliberation in which we do not begin with the assumption that our group's beliefs or ideology is the one true correct view.

MacIntyre is critical of the major ideologies of modernity: liberalism, conservatism, socialism, communism, libertarianism and communitarianism. While there are significant differences between them, all are guilty of uncritically sharing the agenda of modernity and the post-enlightenment world. The purely logical problems he says surprisingly little about, especially the two major ones: the is-ought distinction and the infinite regress problem².

MacIntyre then goes on to provide a critique of two of the dominant secular moral theories of modernity: utilitarianism and Kant's Categorical Imperatives. His major criticism of utility concerns its defective theory of happiness, as compared to Aristotle's *eudaimonia* (usually translated as "happiness"). He does recognize that there is a version of utilitarianism called negative utilitarianism.³ Kant's Categorical Imperative is criticized on

² Since MacIntyre wrote about the is/ought and fact/value distinction in AV, and since his views on first principles are the Aristotelian solution to the infinite regress problem I do not comment on this apparent neglect of a key issue in moral philosophy.

³ Negative Utilitarianism argues for an asymmetry between the moral connotations of pleasure and/or happiness and pain. Only the latter, on this view, has any moral claims on

grounds that it cannot provide the rational justification of morality by its *reductio ad absurdum* method.

Now despite his rejection of Kant and negative utility, Macintyre's deduction of the practical precepts of natural law involve respect for the Lockean triad of rights: life, liberty and property; consequently they forbid us ever to take innocent life, or to inflict bodily harm on the innocent, and enjoins respect for the legitimate property of others. These precepts also have characteristics that they share with Kant's Categorical Imperative: they are universal, exceptionless, the same for all persons and are presuppositions of rational enquiry not inferences from other judgments. He concludes his summary of Thomist natural law theory with the claim that Aquinas's account of the precepts of natural law is not inconsistent with the facts of moral disagreement. "It provides the best starting point for the explanation of these facts" (p. 26).

In chapter two, Jean Porter's answer to the question in the title, "Does Natural Law Provide a Universally Valid Morality?" is 'No'. The two main problems are: (1) while the claims of natural law are allegedly binding on all humans and demonstrably rational, not all humans recognize their universality or their rational cogency. (2) These claims are too indeterminate to define right and wrong, since "murder" and "theft" do not cover all cases of taking human life or human property, so when are they wrong and when right? For example, some people think abortion is always murder, some that it never is and others that it depends on the reasons and timing. Some people think that taxation is theft or that it is above a certain threshold. Many question whether copying music, movies and computer programs that you own is theft.

Chapter eight, authored by John Coughlin, "The Foundations of Human Rights and Canon law", raises interesting questions from historical and philosophical perspectives. What is the logical relation of Natural Law, Natural Rights and theories of Human nature? Coughlin's answer is based on an ambitious attempt to link (pre-Thomist) canon law to later more secular attempts at promoting and proving human rights. He contrasts natural law

individuals or governments, i.e. the avoidance of inflicting pain and suffering and its mitigation or reduction where possible is obligatory but no similar obligation exists to increase anyone's happiness or pleasure.

with positive law, arguing that human rights depend on an objective truth grounded in a universal human nature. He argues that, without such an objective moral foundation, human rights laws will fail. A contrast with a well-known and influential modernist basis may help clarify this. The US Declaration of independence says that it is a self-evident truth that all humans are created equal and endowed with inalienable rights; life liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Later (in the US constitution) these become the Lockean triad of life, liberty and property. The same triad re-appeared in the French Revolution in its early stages, (Aug. 1789). As Donald Sutherland points out, these rights owe their origin to Montesquieu and Locke and hence “to the whole European tradition of natural law” (p. 72).

What Coughlin’s argument comes down to is that canon law is *consistent with*, but not that it *logically implies*, natural rights. Its methodology contributed to human rights theory by calling for reflection on human nature. It also provides the best foundation for such theories. Coughlin seems ambiguous on the issue of a theological foundation for human rights. He rejects the claim that only a theological foundation can provide such a basis. Like MacIntyre, he holds that natural law arguments are based on practical reason with a universal appeal and do not depend on faith. Nonetheless, in his conclusion he says that the anthropology of the canon law with its combination of natural law, theology, and historical circumstances afford an objective standard for human rights law.

Chapter six by Gerald McKenny, “Moral Disagreement and the Limits of Reason”, discusses differences in argument strategies between those (such as MacIntyre) whose prime concern is “how can moral claims be rationally justified” and those (such as Ratzinger) whose prime concern is: “how can the truths of moral claims become effectively persuasive?” (p. 216). McKenny reiterates the problem defined by MacIntyre in chapter one. He outlines moral problems similar to those posed in chapter one that seem intractable. He stresses the apparent contradiction between the claims of reason and the facts of moral disagreement. If, as St. Paul and the Church’s catechism imply, natural law is “present in the heart of each man and established by reason” (p. 197),⁴ then we should find more widespread agreement on the requirements of this law than actually exists.

⁴ Paul uses the Greek word usually translated as “conscience” not “reason”.

McKenny outlines three possible strategies for dealing with this anomalous situation. The first is to deny that moral disagreement is as deep or persistent as many people assume. The second and third solutions are divided into two versions of each. The second is “to deny that reason gives us the kind or degree of knowledge of what is morally good” (p. 199). The third view is divided into two versions one of which is attributed to MacIntyre, the other to Ratzinger. Both make use of an “error theory” (p. 200). In MacIntyre’s view, the error is what led to the unsolved and insoluble Enlightenment Problem.⁵ In Ratzinger’s view, the error is the Enlightenment’s reduction of the role of reason “to empirical and technological rationality” (p. 215). This results in moral values being relegated to the subjective realm.

McKenny argues that it is futile for Christians simply to appeal to reason in the face of moral disagreement, since the natural law tradition shares the fate of the enlightenment project, which proved unable to ground moral and political value in reason alone. This argument applies to both MacIntyre and Ratzinger. They are both unable to show how the natural law tradition can effectively overcome moral disagreement today.

Chapter ten, the final chapter contains MacIntyre’s response to the previous eight critics. In my opinion it is much less well argued than chapter one, so I begin my critical assessment of the book as part of my exposition. In chapter ten, he singles out two critics as presenting the most searching criticisms requiring response: Porter and McKenny. I added Coughlin because of the natural law-natural rights connection.

Contra Porter, MacIntyre argues that practical rationality, if rightly understood, provides everything required for moral life independently of any theological ethics and this includes “how to apply it” (p. 315). On the practical level this entails that natural law can resolve “intractable disputes”. Before turning to one of the most intractable of such disputes, abortion, MacIntyre shifts to the meta-theoretical level, to issues involving first principles. His reply to Porter raises a key point about noninferential truths: such truths can be known noninferentially without being *per se notum* truths (i.e. self-evident truths).⁶ However, MacIntyre says nothing to clarify either the

⁵ The Enlightenment project as explained by MacIntyre is the attempt to rationally justify morality on grounds of reason not religion or tradition.

⁶ *Per se nota* truths are “known through themselves” and so can be either tautologies

differences between these types of “truths” or how such noninferential truths are known. To Porter’s objection that the precepts of natural law are not specific enough regarding the meaning of key moral concepts of murder, theft and adultery, MacIntyre replies by arguing that “murder” is not that open textured or indeterminate and proceeds to use abortion as an example. The main argument is a principle of ontological individualism: the infant at three months after birth “is the same human individual as the embryo at three or six or eight months before birth” (p. 339). He does not discuss the question of whether taking innocent human life might be justified in some situations such as those of the medieval just war theory.

3. Natural Law, Human Rights, and Human Nature

Since many of my criticisms of MacIntyre involve the charge of using *tu quoque* arguments, I will briefly explain what it is, and why it is involved here. The principle here is that, if you criticize my theory because it implies p, and p is indefensible, self-contradictory or we both agree it is wrong-headed, but I can show that your theory also implies p, then your theory faces the same problem you pose for mine.

My comments and criticisms involve several crucial terms, not all of which appear in the text. The first is “shared deliberation”; there appear to be two serious problems with MacIntyre’s views on “shared deliberation”. The first is pragmatic. Just how is such deliberation supposed to take place? The 21st century may seem the ideal time for implementing it since, in theory, we could have all six billion plus people in the world linked to the internet contributing to discussions on “Intractable Moral Disputes”. However, internet discussion groups are not the most encouraging evidence for the possibility of rational, unbiased deliberation. The second point is more serious. It seems that the conditions MacIntyre lays down for such shared deliberation are remarkably similar to Rawls’s conditions for the Social Contract under his contentious “Veil of ignorance”. This is one of several problems for MacIntyre’s arguments of a *tu quoque* nature.

(All circles are round.) or self-evident axioms or assumptions or common notions as in Euclid (Things equal to the same thing are equal to each other.)

In addition, such deliberation seems to assume what MacIntyre rejects as a typical modernist fiction, e.g. Adam Smith's moral sentiments theory and his impartial spectator. It seems clear that Smith's impartial spectator is remarkably similar to a Gods-eye point of view. Now one advantage of MacIntyre's view of natural law is that it circumvents the Euthyphro problem: does God arbitrarily decide that murder, theft and lying are wrong, or does She merely recognize these acts as wrong? According to MacIntyre, natural law is prior to both positive law and also divine law. A parallel with the laws of mathematical logic and physics would help. God does not arbitrarily decide that $7 + 5 = 12$ or that the number pi is non-finite. Nonetheless, God recognizes these truths.

The law of gravity, on the other hand, could be the result of the arbitrary will of God. It does not seem contradictory to deny it, and it is hard to see why She should prefer the gravitational constant to be two rather than an indefinitely large number of other possibilities. It also seems to be difficult to see why God (or the gods) should prefer one person to another so God does (or the gods do) seem to be the ultimate impartial spectator(s).⁷

Most of the text ignores the Golden Rule. This point is not an *ad hominem*: I am not asking why spokespersons for the (alleged) religion of Jesus ignore one of his most prominent teachings. Before I explain my criticism, I will outline two distinct versions of such a rule. The first is the negative version: "Do not do to others what you would not want done to you"; the second, positive version is "Do to others what you would want others to do to you".

There is a two-fold point here. MacIntyre and critics can reply that the Golden Rule is one of the first principles of natural law. It is also relevant to the two major issues addressed in this book: apparent lack of consent to these first principles and the intractable disputes we face today. Almost all of the major (and minor) religions have versions of the Golden Rule.⁸ Yet, they cannot agree on how it applies to real life moral dilemmas: abortion, capital punishment, euthanasia, just war theory, homosexuality, justice and so on. In addition, MacIntyre is highly critical of rules-based ethics as op-

⁷ Unless we wish to introduce ideas of either a chosen race or predestination, neither of which are open to MacIntyre.

⁸ I use "minor" in a non-pejorative sense, i.e. to mean "less numerous" (and perhaps "less influential") so as to include Judaism as a major rather than minor religion.

posed to virtue based ones. However, he never distinguishes between rules and principles, which is an extremely important distinction relevant to recent ethical scandals.⁹

The next point deals with his superficial treatment of negative utilitarianism. I will concede that he has sound criticisms of the Utilitarian concept of happiness, pleasure and utility in general. But he says far too little about the negative side: do we really have such conceptual difficulties with pain, harm and suffering as we do with pleasure, happiness and utility? A great advantage of this view is that it enables us to make what should be an obvious distinction: hedonism versus humanitarianism. It is difficult to see how the increase of anyone's happiness or pleasure can be a duty or obligation. However, a similar claim about avoiding inflicting pain or suffering, and/or reducing and/or mitigating it does not seem absurd or unreasonable. Further, while human rights are discussed as well as other intractable disputes, animal rights issues are conspicuously missing. If there are issues with the taking of innocent human life, are there no issues with taking innocent non-human lives? If not, why not?

The Prisoners' Dilemma is also conspicuous in its absence in this book. This absence fits in with another theme from AV, repeated in the 3rd edition, that modernity is mistaken in seeing the need for morality as due to the natural preference for egoism over altruism. MacIntyre emphasizes this problem whenever he mentions our propensity to prefer power, pleasure, and profit over virtue. I make two other points which are relevant: (1) we can neither reduce the Prisoners' Dilemma to an egoism versus altruism issue, nor (2) can we treat it as another invention of modernity. The pre-Aristotelian equivalent was Gyges' Ring, used by Plato (*Republic*, Ch. 2) to raise the quintessential rational egoist question: "Why be Just?" Another issue seemingly ignored by MacIntyre and critics in this book involve evolutionary explanations of virtue, altruism and co-operation. The Prisoners' Dilemma is not a pure self-interest issue but also a justice/fairness problem. One can play the non-cooperative option for two reasons: to gain an unfair advantage or to compensate for the fact that others are opting to cheat

⁹ The classic case is the Enron scandal. The perpetrators of this fraud mostly followed the rules governing accounting in the USA but used them to disguise the huge debts and to exaggerate their profits thus violating the principles of honesty and integrity.

and thus put you at an unfair disadvantage. For example, if athletes who know that others are using illegal performance enhancing substances, or if honest students know that other students are cheating, but refuse to do so, they put themselves at a disadvantage. Similarly, those who cheat on their tax returns keep more money than those who do not. MacIntyre would definitely say this is not just, (despite not having a clear, coherent concept of justice).

My final points relate to McKenny's critiques and MacIntyre's response. They focus on the main strength and major lacunae in his overall theory of moral reasoning and argument. The strongest points in the book are (1) MacIntyre's theory of practical rationality, (2) MacIntyre's ability to switch back and forth between practical moral issues, moral theories and meta-theoretical level and (3) the critics ability to force MacIntyre to clarify his position and arguments. The last point leads the major lacunae in the form of far too many promissory notes. These concern especially the key ideas of practical rationality, first principles and human rights.

MacIntyre does not see the 1948 United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights as a reason for optimism. He states that his primary concern is "how far certain moral disagreements are intractable" (p. 330) even when the parties to disputes "are rational and have good will" (p. 330). He rejects the claim that his position leads to relativism in practice and somewhat surprisingly asserts that there is no disagreement between his views and the Enlightenment's championing of free thought, equality and other democratic values. Rather the deepest divide is meta-theoretical, that is: "two rival conceptions of reason" (p. 332). This involves the pre-modern Thomist reliance on tradition and a teleological view of human nature to supplement reason.

MacIntyre's attempt to rehabilitate tradition leads his rationalist, modernist, secular critics accuse him of being anti-modernist and anti-rational. But he is neither.¹⁰ He has a much more sophisticated theory of rational argument in ethics than most of his critics. This is because he combines

¹⁰ MacIntyre is almost impossible to categorize in terms of the key labels of modern post French Revolution ideologies: left, right, liberal, conservative, modern, post-modern and so forth. His critique of liberal individualism combines the criticisms made by both conservative and left wing critics.

Aristotelian demonstrative argument theory with what he calls elsewhere “dialectical justification”, which is labelled by McKenny as “dialectical testing” a procedure with parallels to old-fashioned eliminative induction, Karl Popper’s theory of conjectures and refutation, and pragma-dialectics. The best example of how this fits the Popperian model is provided by McKenny. A tradition can be rationally vindicated in a contest with another tradition, if it can resolve problems that other traditions cannot do. Appropriate examples of this appear in the final section of chapter one: (1) “Thomist Aristotelianism provides us all a well-founded and rationally justified moral philosophy”; (2) “the best defence of natural law will consist in radical, philosophical, moral, and cultural critiques of rival standpoints” (pp. 51-52).

MacIntyre defends the power of reason and cites the great “tradition of rational inquiry” (p. 334) from Plato to Aquinas but strangely omits one of the greatest proponents of this tradition, Euclid. MacIntyre refers to the debate between Plato and Aristotle and their followers about first principles. He re-asserts the priority of natural law to divine law and human law and adds an interesting quasi-Kantian argument (without recognizing its origin) in associating Paul with natural law theory to the effect that we could not be held responsible for violations of God’s law if we were not aware of it. This only makes sense given an “ought implies can” principle, since he argues that “we could not be rightly held responsible for violations ... if we were not aware of God’s law *qua* human beings” (p. 344). He claims that this is what Paul is writing about in Romans 2:15. If this does not presuppose “ought implies can”, then why do we need to be aware of it? MacIntyre used similar arguments to dismiss natural rights in AV (69 ff.)

Another problem with MacIntyre’s arguments is pointed out by McKenny: “modern democratic arrangements have themselves come to constitute a historical tradition” (pp. 222-223). This can be combined with the criticism that his views about the enlightenment project, modernity and tradition create a false dichotomy. Again, to cite AV, MacIntyre recognizes a clear difference between the Scottish and French Enlightenments. The details of this are less relevant than the following point: the former was not only much less anti-clerical, it was also not based on pure reason. The predominant theory was the moral sense (or sentiment) theories of Adam Smith and Hume. MacIntyre may see problems with these theories if he wishes to, but then, would he not also have a problem with Paul (Romans 2:14-15) and so

with the Church's use of this to support Natural Law theory as something available to all persons?

Other *tu quoque*-problems with the coherence of many of MacIntyre's arguments arise in his comments on Ratzinger and in his response to Coughlin on human rights and canon law, where he gives no indication of seeing a tension between natural rights and natural law. In AV he stated that "Rights are fictions" (1984, Ch. 6). This is restated in the 3rd edition. But, if natural rights are fictions, then could not natural law be also fiction, since it clearly seems to be a major source of natural rights? His main argument against the latter is that we have no more reason to believe in them than in witches, ghosts, or unicorns (p. 69). This argument claims that it is self-evident that all humans are equal and endowed with inalienable rights. In AV MacIntyre replies to this type of claim by stating "we know there are no self-evident truths" (p. 69) and he categorically rejects appeals to intuition as sufficient to support such alleged truths. This is re-affirmed in the recent 3rd edition. This leads to the most fundamental of all meta-theoretical problems. What is the status of what he calls "non-inferential", or '*per se nota*', truths of natural law? Since MacIntyre rejects self-evident truths and intuition without providing any clues regarding another epistemological alternative, he continues to owe us a substitute account of how we might know these non-inferential truths.

4. Conclusion

Overall, the book is a good effort at clarifying MacIntyre's alternative to modern moral theories and applying it to some of the 'intractable problems' we face. However, at all three levels, practical issues, moral theories and meta-ethical problems, especially that of first principles, the arguments are either exposed to problems raised by critics or insufficiently argued. He is stronger at producing criticisms than justifying his alternative, yet many of his criticisms are subject to *tu quoque*-objections.

I finish with a logical point about the relation of human nature to natural law. While I agree that one cannot deduce a valid moral theory from facts or true theories about human beings, a moral theory must be consistent with human nature. In this area I think that MacIntyre's theory suc-

ceeds. The Thomist Aristotelian uses a theory of human nature that is essentialist, descriptive and normative all at the same time. It is also, arguably, very realistic in being both optimistic and pessimistic. I will defend only the negative aspect in my final paragraph.

Secular critics who dislike the negative aspect involved in the connotations of a “sinful human nature” may wish to substitute “the selfish gene” and get a modern, ‘scientific’ equivalent. What I mean by this is that human beings seem obviously to be mostly (but not entirely) motivated by self-interest and also capable of “limited altruism” so, given the “ought implies can” principle, we should not expect too much from our fellow humans nor too little either. Natural law theory does not violate either of these desiderata. What its modern defenders, whether religious or secular, need to do is to argue that its theory of human nature, first principles and practical rationality are preferable to all the alternatives. I finish with a hypothetical rather than categorical criticism or problem: If MacIntyre and/or his critics can cash in their promissory notes, they will score a major philosophical victory, but if they cannot, we still face all those intractable moral disputes.

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