

On late writings of Alasdair MacIntyre : a critical examination with some  
asides against Trumpism, and on our conditions of life

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I

Here I examine with a critical eye the deeply Thomist swing of Alasdair MacIntyre late in his life in The Tasks of Philosophy (2006) and God, Philosophy, Universities (2009). The 2006 book was what I had in mind when I wrote my first critique on him “One Step Forward and Three Step Backward: MacIntyre’s Full Stop Embrace of Thomism”. I had then between these two books only a knowledge of The Tasks of Philosophy. I then did not even know of the existence of his 2009 book.

I then took The Tasks of Philosophy mistakenly as his last hurrah. However, a full stop Thomism and his uncritical asserting and fundamental uncritical acceptance of fundamental Catholic beliefs are even more solid in the 2009 book. The later book also has a good history of Catholic philosophy from both the Middle Ages and up to Contemporary Times, as well as of Jewish and Arabic thought in the Middle Ages. The latter book is historically speaking insightful, as well as having an acute discussion of Universities and their contemporary ills. Something of his that I am in extensive accord with. My critique of this volume is with his major and uncritically ascertained claims about

a God immortality, the natural law and the necessity of the Catholic faith. These beliefs are just asserted by MacIntyre without argument, evidence or grounds. Here, there is a great departure in many ways from his previous philosophy, particularly from his very early philosophy Marxism: An Interpretation (1953), Marxist Tracts (1956), Out of Apathy (1960) and Against the Self-Images of the Age (1971). I was attuned to and often in accord with his early writings. I think that would be mainly sustained by a careful examination now. But it is not so with what he wrote in 2006 and 2009. When I read these, I was shocked by them, and in thorough disagreement with them. I asked myself how could he, given what he knows. After what he understood in the writings of his early period and of his great historicist middle period, roughly from 1980-1992. There in his three big books, his beliefs and the arguments for them are carefully and comprehensively set out. Books I admired, though not uncritically. And not with the broad and enthusiastic acceptance I had for his earliest books and writings, the ones I have just mentioned from 1953 to 1971.

Is it just again a matter of something like for another time it was to be a Whig in youth and a Tory in old age? In this short volume, I try to critically examine MacIntyre's fundamental and unquestioning Theist Catholic and Thomist beliefs. However, MacIntyre's historical examination here in 2009 is clearly written and historically well-informed and historically insightful, but doctrinely, his philosophical beliefs are just asserted where a defense by justificatory arguments is very much needed. But we do not get that. We just get more assertions that these Thomist beliefs are plainly true. This saddens me as well as shocks me.

We are just stuck here with his obvious articulation and acceptance of Catholicism and Thomism. I do not try to consider whether or not there are some Catholic elements

or even nuances in his Middle Period. Perhaps there are? But there are no dogmatic claims there to a Catholic orientation as there are in The Tasks of Philosophy or in God, Philosophy, Universities. We also get in his middle period an astute historicist orientation.

Naturally, in his historicist 2009 account, Aquinas plays a significant role but so does, and interestingly, John Henry Newman. (After his death Cardinal Newman). In both the 2006 and 2009 writings of MacIntyre's, there is a history and a vigorous defense of Thomism. However sans argument. But in his 2009 writing, there is also an interesting history of the Roman Catholic philosophical tradition and an insightful critical discussion of universities and of Arab philosophers who kept the thought of Aristotle alive, as well as that of the Jewish philosopher Maimonides.

Both these late books of MacIntyre's have matters which are distinctive to them that do not occur in his other books. They are both staunchly and uncritically in defense of Thomism and indeed clearly stated. We can really see where MacIntyre stands. But both are uncritically Thomist. Lots of assertions and little argument. And of a tradition that is by now clearly mistaken and is only of historical interest. MacIntyre's 2009 book is just a significant matter of history and not as a live philosophical tradition. The so-called perennial philosophy is not perennial. No philosophy is. But that is not how MacIntyre sees it. I shall try to show as I did in "One Step Forward and Three Step Backwards" that and why Aquinas and the other philosophers of his time are now only of historical interest. This is also true of contemporary Thomism. But it is also true of Maimonides. But this is starkly just the opposite of what MacIntyre believes and writes in his late works.

MacIntyre's account of The Tasks of Philosophy, as I have said, defends vigorously Thomism but also surprisingly defends as well what MacIntyre calls Peircian-Popperian falsificationism and takes it there not only to be compatible with Thomism but necessary for what he calls a perfected form of Thomism. But this is something that clashes with Thomism as ordinarily understood, early and late, and as well with how Aquinas wrote. But this gesture toward modernity of Thomism is, or was, crucial for MacIntyre's own philosophical account when he wrote The Tasks of Philosophy. Yet he is no friend of pragmatism or logical empiricism of empiricism period. There is then (2006) his Peircian-Popperian turn, but it is not in his 2009 book.

I have argued rather conventionally that falsificationism and Thomism are incompatible. But that standard difficulty is not even mentioned let alone examined in The Tasks of Philosophy. That falsification is just taken by him as a necessity for a modern-day (perfected) Thomism. But, such falsificationism sets uneasily with Thomism. There is, however, no mention, let alone a defense, of such a Peircian-Popperian falsificationism in God, philosophy, Universities. It first led me at first to think he had abandoned it there. Abandoned, that is, a belief he had taken in The Tasks of Philosophy to be an important part of perfected Thomism. Indeed, a crucial part. But later reflection led me to believe he need not have changed his mind in the God, Philosophy, Universities. For that is a history and a history need not be a critical part of his Thomism. A historian of philosophy may just be concerned with telling it like it was. But a Peircian-Popperian falsificationism is very foreign to the Thomist tradition. MacIntyre's method of using it in The Tasks of Philosophy fundamentally changes how he would articulate Thomism. It is not just a minor amendment. But there is a big real change.

It shifts the very direction of his whole project. It gives us a twist of an empirical point that is utterly antagonistic to the grand old First Philosophy, the perennial philosophy that Thomism has been called and calls itself. Thomism could not be so altered without changing its fundamental character in a radical way. It fits badly with the spirit of Thomism. Such a falsificationism at least in any theory with something of a modern Peircian-Popperian way goes well with an empiricist verificationist way that is utterly foreign to Aquinas and Thomism and the rest of the scholastics. And it is as well antithetical to MacIntyre's rejection of modernism, though that is not so decisive for him. But MacIntyre need not mention any of that last part or get entangled in that where he gives a pure historical accounting of Aquinas and of Thomism. Still MacIntyre is articulating and defending his own perfected and in effect altered Thomism in The Tasks of Philosophy. There, such a falsificationist account is indeed a crucial part of his perfected account. But that makes MacIntyre's Thomism a very unThomistic Thomism. His laundered Thomism – he would say perfected – is very foreign to classical Thomism. It is like making Spinoza into a modernized nationalist. Though naturally he was, though not like Dewey. Anyone with a historicist sensibility. Something that MacIntyre once exemplified. Indeed, he once had an acute historicist sense. With a historicism in that mode there he tried in The Tasks of Philosophy to put consistently and congruently two radically different philosophical sensibilities together. But they clearly appear at least to be incompatible. But in sketching a purely historical account he need not, and should not, get so entangled. But viewed philosophically such a conjunction is very untoward. Augustine and Aquinas are one thing, Peirce and Popper are another. Conceptually, philosophically, MacIntyre's so-called perfected Thomism is misbegotten. In treating Thomism purely historically, he need

not be engaged in a philosophical orientation on his own part. He needs only to make a good case for being accurate about Aquinas. And to put it in a manner that his readers will understand. But that is not to make him into something he is not. That is like trying to make Spinoza into a historicist. MacIntyre's Thomism very much seems to rest on a mistake. MacIntyre links Aquinas and Peirce-Popper without a justification or even showing how there could be one in The Tasks of Philosophy. He does not need to engage in that task in purely doing history as he does in God, Philosophy, Universities. He need not consider such matters. But he has not given us a 'perfected Thomism' in The Tasks of Philosophy or any place else.

But when he goes philosophical as well, he should but does not face the conflict in his The Tasks of Philosophy. He mixes in there two very different modes of philosophical thinking which very much at least seem to be incompatible. He practices two radically different forms of life that are also forms of philosophical talk that do not fit together. Is there not even something of a positivistic carry over in his The Tasks of Philosophy (2006)? It has a thomistically jarring component that is untenable with his God, Philosophy, Universities (2009). But that full stop Thomism is plainly mistaken. Is MacIntyre not up the creek without a paddle? At the very least it very much seems to be so.

I first thought he had changed his view from The Tasks of Philosophy in his God, Philosophy, Universities. But this need not be so. Still MacIntyre's Peircian-Popperian falsificationism in the Tasks of Philosophy is in contradiction with standard Thomism, the old perennial philosophy. But perhaps not with what MacIntyre calls his 'perfected Thomism'? This 'perfected Thomism' comes to radically change Thomism. But God,

Philosophy, Universities is not so characterized and indeed is well characterized as a selective history of the Catholic philosophical tradition. It does ground that in a clear way though it leaves us though without obscurantism, with an evident dissatisfaction that will be felt by most philosophers. Hardcore Thomists aside, difficulties will be culturally felt concerning Thomism. But I wish counterfactually that something like God, Philosophy, Universities had been available when right after the Second World War I studied philosophy as a freshman and sophomore at St. Ambrose College in Davenport, Iowa. Alasdair MacIntyre is one thing. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange is another. The latter is a traditional Catholic Thomist full stop. With all its weaknesses. The MacIntyre of the Tasks of Philosophy has something that is clearly not in that mode with his Peircian-Popperianism. But that is clearly incompatible with Thomism and so with the alleged perennial philosophy. God, Philosophy, Universities is not so 'perfected'. But it is clearly articulated in the way Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange and his cohorts were not. But that Thomism has been clearly refuted. But either way, we get something that has key elements which are just asserted. Both Garrigou-Lagrange and MacIntyre's Thomism belong in the dust bin of history.

## II

This leads me to certain autobiographical comments that, though not philosophical, may not be amiss here. I was not brought up as a Catholic. My parents were not very religious if religious at all. Except for the time of illness after my birth my mother who then, in a way, became very religious as she became intermittently very ill. I was an only child, I was also born after my parents had been married for twenty-two years and they thought at that time that my mother could not have become pregnant. But she did with me. She,

after my birth, was frequently ill. I suspect that out of desperation she became a dedicated Protestant Christian and adopted one of the most absurd, though for understandable, Christian sects, namely 'Christian Science'. In her illness, its absurdity certainly was not at all in her mind. 'Christian Science', she believed, if properly practiced would relieve her of that illusion that she was ill by showing her that her so-called sickness was just an illusion. With a proper understanding of her illusion, that was what 'Christian Science' would deliver, she would be all right. That was, however, her belief. Fortunately, my mother's practice of 'Christian Science' actually was in effect rather, though unwittingly, pragmatic. There was kept a family doctor not only for my father and for me but for herself as well. It was better, she must have thought, to play it safe on both sides. But perhaps it was on my father's insistence? I do not know. There were such things then as family doctors for people who were reasonably well-off, as my parents were. Doctors then came to your home to care for your health. For my mother that was a back-up to her of her 'Christian Science' therapy. She repeatedly read Mary Baker Eddy, the major 'Christian Science' articulator. By contrast, my father was also brought up in Copenhagen until he was fifteen into another nearly as absurd Christian sect, 'Seven-Day Adventism'. Something of an anomaly in the then Lutheran Denmark. But by adulthood, he was rather distant from religion. He did not declaim against religion. He just rather silently disregarded it. He was more interested in the stock market and making money and in working hard. In saying that, I am not saying or suggesting he was not a good person. He was a good father. I suspect that he did not believe in God. But when as a child I protested about going to Sunday school or later to church, feeling they were very boring, he would say 'Come on Kai go to church it's good for mother'. He grew up in Denmark



until he was 15 in a rather strange family. Remember Denmark and indeed all of Scandinavia was extensively very religious then. Even Søren Kierkegaard did not change things, nor did he expect to. By now, the times have changed. Jesuits were, in my father's early age, banned from coming to Norway. My father's father had been a carpenter and an alcoholic. He gave up drinking and became a 'Seventh Day Adventist', another nutty Christian sect nearly as nutty as 'Christian Science'. I do not imply here that all Christian sects are nutty, but some surely are. My father's father gave up alcohol, abandoned carpentry and became a Bible peddler and distributed copies of his sect's propaganda. When my father, as a boy, once asked his father what he should do when he grew up, his father replied: "Son, you won't grow up, before that the world will come to an end". Denmark was a very different place then than it is now. But even by Denmark's very Lutheran standards, my grandfather was not going with the cultural flow. The standard flow was based on doctrinaire Lutheran Protestant Christianity. My grandfather's family – a family of twelve children – was a family that was against conscription into the Danish armed forces. (I guess as well any armed forces). So, when my father's oldest brother was of draft age, they emigrated and went to the United States deck passage on a ship in winter. When a passenger fell off, the ship, my father told me, did not stop. My father arrived in the United States and stayed with his family for a while in New York City. On arrival my father did not know a word of English. He was put in the first grade of a primary school. He was 15 years old and was in a school with 6-year-old English-speaking children. He stayed in school two days and then left. That was the end of his education. Education in Denmark has since radically changed. Now every child at the age of 7 starts to learn English in school and they are all in school and stay there for a considerable time.

Many going to a tuition-free university. In some ways, and in some places, things are getting better.

My father was not big on religion, but he was not attacking it either. When I was a philosophy doctoral student at Duke University, I once neutrally but in a simple form described to my father Paul Tillich's theology. He replied categorically 'that man is an atheist'. I surmise that many of Alasdair MacIntyre 'plain persons' would agree with my father. But in reality, Tillich was encrypting 'plain God-talk' of Judeo-Christianity into an obscure artist metaphysical idiom. There was a time when my father was a boy in Denmark when most people in Denmark were standardly Lutheran religious. But not at all in Søren Kierkegaard's sense. Kierkegaard ironically said there were no Christians in the Christian Kingdom of Denmark and said that belief in God had and indeed should be crucifixion of the intellect. But stick to it all the same. Was it to be in some strange way a 'perfected' sense? I remember my Danish grandmother bouncing me as a small child on her knee and telling me 'I love your father and mother, but they are unbelievers and they're going to hell'. Her bad breath bothered me more than her saying. I was sent by my mother to a Christian Science Sunday school when I was for that appropriately young. But I raised so much trouble, such a spoilt obstreperous little boy that I was, that I was expelled. After that, I was sent by my Swedish maid, Martha Nieburg, probably on my mother's instructions, to a Lutheran Sunday school, but it had the same result. Though this time it took them a little longer. After that I was freed from Sunday school. My expulsions were not because I was an early child critic of religion, but because I was a bored spoilt brat. I did not know enough then to be anti-religious. I was just bored and impatient.

My small brutishness had a causal history. My parents, as I have mentioned, had been married for twenty-two years before I was born, and I was their only child. After that, as I have mentioned, my mother was often very ill. When I was very little, I remember her often being in bed. Martha Nieburg the maid became like a second mother to me and I was very fond of her. And both of us later were very distressed when she was promptly dismissed. Does all of this say anything about my later history? But anyway, my religious enculturation was scant on the ground. Was my then experience as a little boy causally important in what became my anti-religion?

I turn now to what per accident was my next though unintentional encounter with religion. When I was in high school, in my last two years, I went to St. Ambrose Academy, a Catholic school. Not because of religion but because I wanted to play on their basketball team. My father, who had what for Scandinavians at the time was the usual prejudice against Catholicism, was actually reluctant to let me go to St. Ambrose, but after considerable pleading – by now adolescent spoiled youngster – my parents let me go. Even as an adolescent, the spoiled-child syndrome prevailed.

My father again per accident came later to have enculturation. It came about in the following way. My father used to go out to watch my basketball practices at St. Ambrose and talk while he was at it with the teacher priests who were also watching practice. He came to like them and came to feel that Catholics were after all alright. But he never became any more enthusiastic about Catholicism than he was about Protestantism. Religion was not a matter of interest to him. But it was not their religion that made him like them. But I suspect because they were good sports to talk to. But it withered away his prejudice against Catholics. All of this just embarrassed me. Why did my father come

to watch practice? Often parents did not do that. Why did he not do right, as a many saying has it, 'like the other folks do'?"

Things were different for him in Scandinavia than they are now. He only, as I have said, had early education in Denmark until he was 15 years old. Then, in the United States, he was still able to become without much education a superintendent of a big branch in the Prudential Insurance company in the United States. A superintendent in Moline, Illinois and also around it, where I grew up. Sometimes I wonder how he got that prestigious job. I think he was hired because, among other things, he could speak Swedish. It is very close to Danish and Moline was, then, loaded with Swedish immigrants who came to work in the John Deere's automobile plant and at that time as distinct from now, who hardly knew a word of English when they arrived. Now most Swedish and Danish and indeed most Scandinavians have learned to speak English and not just the upper classes with a university education and learned to speak it well. But I, as I have said, went to St. Ambrose not even remotely because of religion or even because of education, but because of their basketball team. But I was in for a surprise. My going to St. Ambrose Academy was during World War II. St. Ambrose Academy and St. Ambrose College – they were both on the same campus – were solely men's schools. This was common then. The college section as distinct from the Academy section, during the war, had no students. Moreover, eventually during the war, the College was taken over by the Navy and became a training school for their naval officers. But St. Ambrose Academy remained intact with its students of pre-draft age. But the priest teachers and the few laypersons who were not drafted who had taught in the College remained to teach in the Academy. Both the priests and some of the laypersons who had been teaching at the

College came to teach in the Academy. Their teaching was superior to the teaching I had had before in Moline High School. It was for the first time in school when I became interested in learning and as well had well-educated teachers. I took plain geometry from such teacher where I first learned to think logically. I came to understand what a logical proof was and delighted in it, and I also had a lay teacher who was a wartime refugee from Austria, who taught European history and made me interested in history. It was not with him a matter of learning names of Kings and Queens and past presidents and the like or important historical dates, the usual 'history' learned in school. It was real history. I loved it.

So I came to like very much the school there for the first time. I had at St. Ambrose Academy no sense of being indoctrinated into Catholicism or directed in that direction. If there was some indoctrination, it was subtle. I neither went to retreat as Catholic students had to nor to any religious occasions, nor was I expected to go to them. Perhaps there were some I could have gone to but I never did.

I was neither told nor was it suggested to me that Catholicism was the true faith or anything like that. I learned just as if I were in a secular environment. There may have been some Catholic influence, but if so it was subtle. There was, however, some influence by some of the teachers on me, but it was not at all religious. But they did not shudder on me or take special notice of me. I just kept to my studies and playing basketball as well as football going on to track and ran, not very well, in long-distance races. There was the sign of the cross at the beginning of the class, but that was just routine and there was no requirement of it for the students or perhaps even notice if you did not take note and did

not make the sign of the cross. I cannot remember what I did. Nothing that had any influence one way or another.

My previous experiences with religion had made me think that it is all gobbledygook and boring. I was indifferent rather than hostile. At St. Ambrose I had teachers whom I knew to be religious, but they did not bother me about it. But they were learned and mostly were intelligent and interesting and taught me a lot.

I graduated from high school and went off to war, first in the merchant marine officers' training school which I detested, and then to actual war theaters in the Pacific on a ship of the merchant marine, something I did not at all detest during the war.

But my merchant ship, in addition to the war areas, also went to South America and up and down the West Coast of the USA and Southwestern Canada. The war was, fortunately for me, rather uneventful. Only once was our merchant ship, an armed freighter, attacked unsuccessfully by a Japanese plane. Also, once we went from California, not to the Pacific to the war zone, but the Western South America. The last trip I took with our ship was in the Pacific near the end of World War II. It was to a little island in the Pacific, whose name I have forgotten, where the plane or planes took off that dropped the atomic bombs. That rapidly ended the Second World War. Even then as an innocent green behind the ears young man I was opposed to the atomic bombings. Like my shipmates, I was glad that the war was at the end but not at the cost of such a bombing. I realized then how horrible it was. Or, more accurately, somewhat is its horror. The only thing I knew then was that it was horrendous. It seemed to me that it was necessary. Like many others, I came to know that it was an incredible horror. Something

that should not happen to anyone. I later came to see it was also a necessity. But I was met with vigorous opposition by at least most of my shipmates. Some just kept quiet while I yapped a bit against the bombing. Before that we lay an anchor near the submarine net to protect our ship. That lasted nearly six months. Our number-one hold had bombs on the ship that were of the wrong size for the war's later purposes. So, they were just not used. After the war they were brought back with the ship to San Francisco to be disposed of.

Before that, we had laid at anchor for nearly six months. So there, I had a lot of time to read. I had lugged along books which were then called modern library "books", which were then selling for 95 cents a book. I do not think there were paperbacks. The books I brought along included Plato's Republic, Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Spinoza's Ethics, John Dewey's Human Nature and Conduct, along with several novels. I did not like Plato at all. But of the rest, I did. Most particularly Spinoza on human bondage and human freedom. With these books, I secured unwittingly my first introduction to philosophy. It wasn't religious at all but of all these books I have listed, the first two reflected the influence of some of my teachers at St. Ambrose Academy.

After the war ended, I went home to Allegan, Michigan to a farm which had been my mother's mother's. My father, retired and wealthy as he was, modernized after it had come to my parents' hands after the death of my mother's mother. And they moved from Moline to Allegan, Michigan.

After the war, I went for a short time to Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a few miles away from Allegan where their farm was. I chose that University so

I could be with my girlfriend, who was from Kalamazoo. I foolishly ran away from Western Michigan University after a couple of weeks to marry my girlfriend at a very early age for both of us. We ended up in Davenport, Iowa where St. Ambrose College was. After my parents forgave me, I went to College there. Partly because my then wife was a Catholic and partly because Catholicism then seemed attractive and coherent and my favorite St. Ambrose Academy teacher who came back teaching at St. Ambrose married us, I converted to Catholicism a little later. That was very unlike what I had encountered as religion as a child, which even then had seemed ridiculous. Catholicism then seemed to me to be reasonable. I was reading John Henry Newman. But acceptance of Catholicism or any other religion only lasted for two years. Reading and thinking led me to the break with religion. My wife and I moved to the University of North Carolina after two years in College in Davenport. I went there wanting to be a writer. I majored in English literature where the English department was very strong as was the department of drama. I took courses with both departments as well as five or six courses in philosophy. At that time, the philosophy department did not exist. I wrote my undergraduate honor's thesis for the English department on James Joyce. I came to share the non-religious beliefs Joyce made Stephen Dedalus express. A partly autobiographical, sometime ironical characterisation of the main character of Joyce's which was often taken to be of Joyce himself in Joyce's Portrait of The Artist as a Young Man. When in that novel Buck Mulligan asked Joyce's Stephen Dedalus the following question after the latter had failed to make his Easter Duty. The character Mulligan is made to say to Dedalus: "So you're going to become a black Protestant then?" to which Dedalus replies: "No I would rather believe in



an absurdity which is logical and coherent than an absurdity which is illogical and incoherent.”

That was also indicative of my own attitude on my first adult departure from religion. It was a considerable time before I came to recognize that Protestantism sometimes takes as sophisticated forms as does Catholicism. That thinking of Joyce. But not other influences of Joyce on me. My undergraduate honor's thesis for the English department at the University of North Carolina was on him. Later, I came to see that Protestantism sometimes takes as sophisticated forms as Catholicism. Perhaps sometimes even more sophisticated forms, though some of its sects are incredibly primitive.

I experienced the sophisticated sides of Catholicism at St. Ambrose College in my first two years in College. Particularly from Professor Patrick McCoy, a priest, and in philosophy from Thomas Flynn, a layperson who had studied with Étienne Gilson and Jacques Maritain at St. Michael's College of the University of Toronto. These two professors deeply influenced me. They also were remarkable human beings. With McCoy, I read in a seminar Cardinal Newman. Newman was an impressive intellectual. That was a Cardinal to be attended to and respected, but I learned later there were other Cardinals of a different sort, like Cardinal Spellman who was a reactionary primitive hack. I think he influenced Joseph MacCarthy. Whatever, they were birds of a feather.

Now, of course, and through my long writing life and increasing so in my old age, all beliefs in God and immortality and the like seem to me absurd to their very core. Though I continue to like plain chant. Though I am anything but an evangelical atheist.

As for Richard Rorty, the whole subject bores me. My understanding here is increasingly without his passion about it.

I experienced the sophisticated side of Catholicism at St. Ambrose Academy and St. Ambrose College. In philosophy, I remember working hard at Aristotle and Aquinas with Flynn. Even then, I began to have trouble with religion. It seemed to me then that it was important to be able to give good grounds to believe in God's existence. It was not something we could just rely on faith. Flynn admitted that Aquinas' proofs were troublesome. Remarking that of the five ways, the third way was the strongest. Now, of course, and through most of my long life, and increasingly so with old age, belief in God or immortality or belief that a belief in God is necessary to ground morality, or our political life though the natural law seems to me increasingly absurd. Even the very idea of the natural law seems to me an error. Though I continue to like plain chant. Both some Protestants and some Catholics have Neanderthalish irrational beliefs. On the Protestant side, at the pinnacle of irrationality, they are likely to be evangelical, though in some place for poor uneducated people that is for them important. We must not scoff at that, though we should be saddened by it. Saddened, that is, that they have only that to make sense of their lives. But to be saddened should not mean to be patronizing, let alone contemptuous. Not to say to regard them as Nietzschean 'herd animals'. People so stretched out are more likely to be Trump supporters. Our world is darkening.

However, there are believers and believers. Some are even heroic and much to be applauded, Father Berrigan for example. He was exemplary.

Back to MacIntyre. The historicism of his middle period does not resonate with the plain assertive manner of his last two books. Namely, the books of 2006 and 2009. There, he just asserts the reality of God and our immortality and reality and the truth of the natural law without the slightest attempt to give reasons for them. Let alone face of the existence of the at least seemingly crushing criticisms they have received. He just asserts that God is Being as such. But what are we talking about here? Not a being. Not even a spiritual being, whatever that is. Some people today claim they are spiritual but that they do not believe in God. Let alone claiming to be God. And Being as such is not a god like the gods of Ancient Greece or God as the perfect super person. But then what is a Being as such? How is what Christians call, metaphorically, our heavenly Father? What is it a metaphor of? We are in clouds here. Christians as well as Jewists and Islamists are all arm naming here, with varying degrees of primitiveness. They should not be in any way discriminated against, but they are caught tightly in mythological thought which is at best false and more likely indecent. Many things we and they themselves understand not what.

Such religious matters that are taken as true or even plausibly so in the last two of his books and that he does not try to claim so takes prior to them in any extensive writings. I speak here of beliefs that are at the core of Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Anthropocentrically conceived or not. He plainly, in the last two books he wrote, just asserts their reality and truth with confidence. But no argument. Again, we have the familiar phenomenon of a Whig in youth and a Tory in old age. Whether this is so or not, MacIntyre now just asserts such beliefs with confidence. A confidence that such deity – a non-anthropomorphic deity – exists. This is a dogmatism that is unlike his earlier self.

Beliefs embedded in a belief-system that proclaims that all Thomists in order to be Thomists must believe that God is Being as such. But that itself is something that is not understood, not comprehensible. That is very unlikely to be even understandable. What then is or even can be such a reality is likely to be incomprehensible. Something that MacIntyre says but does not show. Reason is being neglected.

Still, it is not only just believed by all Thomists, but is for them taken to be a fundamental alleged truth. It is said to us rather paternalistically and also unwarrantedly to be a central part of the Perennial Philosophy, the First Philosophy. As if there were such a thing. What we actually have is an absurdity which dumbs our understanding down.

Here I am affronting bluntness with bluntness. Just assertion after MacIntyre's assertion. Are we not here both just declaring? I hate to rest with this. This has not always been true of MacIntyre. MacIntyre earlier, from 1953 until 1971, deeply influenced me and I was generally attuned with him and even, to a certain extent, for the great books of his middle period writings After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (1981), Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (1988) and Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry (1990). Those books also challenged and influenced me. But you can already see the influence of Catholicism and Thomism in them. But they are not as categorical as is his full stop and assertive approach in his last two books that I concern myself with in this writing.

Here I ask myself a question. Am I not in what I have just mostly also just not affronting bluntness with bluntness? I dislike to rest with this. However, in my only textbook Reason and Practice: a Modern Introduction to Philosophy (1971), the only

textbook I have ever written, I have in detail given arguments for such claims as I mentioned above and other ones as well. McIntyre has provided none in his last two books nor has he elsewhere. In his last two books, he describes well what his Catholic religious tradition is. But he has provided no arguments for the existence of God, the soul, life after death or the natural law. He there just takes these matters for granted. With respect, proving little, the truth or even the cogence of these matters, he has left us with a blank. We learn accurately what the Catholic tradition is, including something of its philosophy, but get no argument for the defense of its fundamental claims.

I dislike being so dismissive of MacIntyre for concerning the earlier writings from 1953 to 1971 I was in much in attune with him and then we were in many ways on very similar paths. But even to a certain extent I was in accord with him in his After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory (1981) and in his other two big books of his middle period. They all are important books deriving of study. They deeply, though not without reservations, influenced me. I was in sympathy and yet critically attuned to them. But not so, for the most part, in his last two books. I was aghast at some things he claimed. I could barely believe it. How could he?

Still I will try to modify such bluntness when I examine certain passages of God, Philosophy, Universities. Consider, for example, the last part of Chapter Ten "Aquinas: Philosophy and the Life of Practice". His categorical acceptance of Thomism and Catholicism is in my view not just three steps backward but ten steps backward. Indeed, by then, 2006 and 2009, he is in full retreat. Not so from among all the central themes from his historicist middle period account from the period 1981 to 1992. With these substantial three books starting with his After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory where I was

critically in accord with much of what he was saying, if not with acceptance of it all. But there were already some signs of his Catholic turn. But not to the complete, uncritical extent of his last two books, where he is flat out Thomist. By then he was in full retreat from his earlier somewhat Marxist and historicist writings. We have now a new MacIntyre. He is now (2006 and 2009) at least in philosophical ways like a Whig in youth and a Tory in old age. There is an utter retreat from his historicism to similarities to unwarranted and impossible identification with being an eternalist. Something that no one can achieve. Something that few can believe in our fallibilist culture. But to be a fallibilist need not take a skeptic. But it is to believe we cannot escape contingency. It is now, on MacIntyre's part, to do so and have a categorical acceptance of Catholicism and Thomism. This is not a reasonable turn. It has at least a family resemblance to an unwanted and impossible identification with believing in substantive eternal beliefs that can be rationally specified or even intelligibly asserted. Something that no one can possibly achieve. To have a belief that there are such substantive eternal beliefs is something that cannot be justified. It is something that few can believe is even possible and that just a few believe including what makes no sense. But on MacIntyre's part, his commitment to a categorical acceptance of Catholicism and Thomism commits him to such beliefs. Beliefs that have the earmarks of unintelligibility. This is not a reasonable turn. Is this the pot calling the kettle black?

Historicism is mostly and particularly, by contrast, a thoroughly historicized view of the world. Contingency for anything substantive.

MacIntyre does not make any attempt at refuting the claims that morality and practice in any but a limited banal way that is thoroughly historically and culturally distinct across societies. He is in his old age, a paradigm of a Whig in youth and a Tory in old

age. He defends unquestioningly the Roman Catholic religious hegemonic stance. He has there a religious hegemonic stance without laicity. Central Catholic religious beliefs are not something to be taken up and by evidence or argument to be up for rational defense and argument.

In his middle period, MacIntyre at least had a strong sense of historicism, taking that direction we will never attain any substantive knowledge that is a historical transcendence.

When people are Christians or Jews or Moslems they often are also what MacIntyre calls 'plain persons'. And usually have ordinary beliefs about God. But such religious persons with such beliefs believe in something, they have faith in something that is either plainly false or unintelligible. Where their belief is empirically false, their theism is too much like believing in Zeus. Most of them are locked into a plain falsehood concerning religion. Something that Spinoza realized way back in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Theists are people who are often as well people who have an understanding of many different societies by now. But ethnocentrism is still widespread in such societies. Where in such societies there are many anthropocentric theists though less frequently so as modernity and sometime laicity sinks in. Though theists, anthropocentric or not, are more common in the USA or South Africa than in Scandinavia, Holland or Switzerland.

However, in many developed societies, particularly in Europe, as secularism and modernism grows, religious indifference or abandonment grows stronger. Some are of the conviction that it is incoherent; others less cognitively oriented and educated are still influenced by religion. Cultures is very influential in one way or other. Some describe

themselves as spiritual, but not religious. But anyway, some might react, 'who cares'? But reflecting concerning taking or having a religious point of view need not either lead to alienation or to a sense of liberation.

Some who have had a religious life and reflect about it seriously will feel something like some sense of abandonment, with a sense of incoherence concerning religion, when it comes knocking at the door. Not for me, I feel neither a loss of something of truth nor from that would enable me to have a sense of meaning in or of my life. Something that is already there. I do not feel devoid of a sense of meaning with this breaking with religion. It is the breaking with religion that gives meaning to my life. I think of myself as free from such illusions and I appreciate that and I am glad of that but I do not feel that my life is either more or less meaningful, or better or worse except that there is one great illusion that I am free of and that liberates us, and that is a good thing.

Escape from contingency cannot be achieved. There is no achieving an eternalist view, religious or secular, or the world or of any substantial matter. There is no philosophy and morals (a moral point of view) and a political orientation that is substantively incorrigible. There can be substantive view of reality. We can not escape fallibility and contingency. Our substantive realities are largely historicized, though they perhaps have some non-historicized kernels of a banal sort, e.g. unnecessary suffering is bad, or matter exists. But Thomism's claims are something much stronger and much more questionable. Something transcendent that is also substantive and crucially substantive. We do not even understand what it is like to take transcendental points of view. Perhaps even an incoherency. Such matters are illusory. That substantive non-contingent alleged reality cannot be attained or perhaps even intelligibly grasped. There is no transcendental or



substantively non-contingent world view, or even a reality. However, Thomism claims there is and MacIntyre is with them full stop, but there no such an attainment. Spinoza in a naturalistic form claimed to escape contingency and fallibility. But then he failed and that was a pure naturalism. Thomism, on top of Spinoza, goes supernatural. He at least just sticks with nature. Thomism's Being as such is incoherent and a Zeus-like anthropomorphic god is plainly false. There is no way of transcending for anything of human concern that, except for some banal truisms, e.g. rain is wet, human beings are animals that will die just as certainly as swans will. What is of deep human concern is contingent and will not live forever.

However, MacIntyre does not react in this way. He confidently remarks: "God makes us aware of the precepts of the natural law as binding from upon us by enabling us to grasp them as precepts of reason and so promulgating them" (MacIntyre, 2009: 89). We need, he tells us at the end of this chapter, that "over and above the cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, courage and justice, we also need the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity," (MacIntyre, 2009: 92). We should leave aside whether they should be called or even are theological. But attend to what MacIntyre says about them in the paragraph immediately following. There he says "It is in the end up to us whether or not we are becoming prudent, temperate, courageous and just." (MacIntyre, 2009: 92) But it is not at all up to us whether the gifts of faith, hope, and charity, virtues that we owe, MacIntyre has it, entirely to divine grace, a grace offered to us by God, virtues that are infused in us rather than acquired through habituation. Why so distinguish, or try to distinguish, in this way between these virtues? Why think, even if there is a God, that for any of them that they have these virtues? Why think that any of them where they have

them are not just due to human habituation, to social inculturation, to how we have been brought up, and perhaps sometimes due to our physical nature. Isn't bringing in God utterly arbitrary? And unexplanatory? It clearly is both. Moreover, is it not at least arbitrary to say, as Aquinas does as MacIntyre puts it, "charity... is the form of all virtues? Wherever there is genuine virtue, it is informed by charity, and grace being at work." (MacIntyre 2009: 92). Why so distinguish virtues, why bring God in? Indeed can we even do it? What MacIntyre is saying is at best all arbitrary. He goes on to say "that a purely secular understanding of the moral life is always inadequate and incomplete both with regard to its end, namely the vision of God. The most that reason can show is that no finite object or state of affairs could be our good, but also with regard to the character that we need to have, if we are to become able to attain that end" (MacIntyre 2009: 92). Here we have a plenitude of errors, arbitrary claims, and incoherences. There is no divine grace, God or non-finite objects to exhibit this. Moreover, faith is not such a virtue. Indeed, there is no such virtue. And neither charity nor any other virtue is the form of all virtues. It is unclear, to put it mildly, what this would be.

This does not, nor does anything else that MacIntyre has said here, establish or give us a good reason to believe that a purely secular moral understanding will always be inadequate or that we need a vision of what our true ends are. Doesn't talk of bringing in our alleged final end not come to anything except arm waving? Do we understand what it even is to the extent that we will have the slightest reason to think we have such an end or that there is any agreement about what we human beings know of that true end? We should be skeptical about all of that. It sounds too much like blabber. Even if we take MacIntyre's claim "the most that reason can show is that no finite object or state of affairs

could be our final end” (MacIntyre 2009, 92). Of course, not because the very conception is incoherent, though we might kid ourselves into believing so otherwise. We may very well would like to feel we have a final end, but when we carefully reflect it is something we know not what and indeed understand not what. At best it is a future of illusion.

### III

MacIntyre discusses Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical Aeterni Patris. MacIntyre, following Leo, remarks that post-sixteenth century philosophy, whether Kantian, Hegelian, materialist or positivist is riddled with errors even sometimes thinking that the natural sciences are our only genuine source of knowledge. What later has been called scientism. Namely, the belief that what science cannot tell us, humankind cannot know. We then, as Pope Leo XIII claims and argues and MacIntyre follows him, we are caught with deep errors and doubts that Leo XIII sees can be answered to. But there, MacIntyre claims, we seem to be confronted with a paradox.

For on the one hand the encyclical tells us that it is from the standpoint of reason, not that of faith, that we are to proceed. Yet on the other it declares that a root cause of philosophical error is the separation of philosophy from faith. Is the encyclical inconsistent? Not so, if we remember [Cardinal]Newman’s view that all of us enter upon philosophical argument bringing in with us our pre-philosophical convictions and biases. What faith enables us to recognize is the nature and influence of those convictions and biases as sources of error, something to which we are otherwise apt to be blind. As a result we do not realize how difficult it is to become genuinely rational enquirers, to find the right starting point for philosophical enquiry, for we carry with us into our philosophical enquiries unrecognized prejudices and assumptions. Part of the gift of Christian faith is to enable us to identify accurately where the line between faith and reason is to be drawn, something that cannot be done from the standpoint of reason, but only that of faith. Reason therefore needs Christian faith, if it is to do its own work well. Reason without Christian faith is always reason informed by some other faith, characteristically an unacknowledged faith, one that renders its adherents liable to error.

Where are we to find examples of philosophical enquiry in which reason, instructed by faith, does its own work successfully? We should find them above all in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. (MacIntyre, 2009: 152-153)

In think MacIntyre shows that Pope Leo XIII is not caught in a contradiction here and that Leo is surely right in asserting that all of us, including of course all philosophers, anti-philosophers, all Popes and all critical intellectuals, when we are engaging in philosophical argument, have pre-philosophical convictions and biases. Leo and MacIntyre are not exempted. We are not capable of pure reason, theoretical or practical, and never can be. That should make us fallibilistic, but with a little skepticism even about fallibilism itself. But certainly, that will not kick in for any attempt for what is inordinately impossible, namely absolutism. However, that does not make cowards of us all or even evaders but it leaves room for reasonability. The making us much more reasonable human beings. We should beware of trumpeting claims of certainty.

We do not need and should not be inclined to religious faith of any kind or even to its secular analogies. Spirituality, for example. Having faith or even just trust sometimes leads to errors or even superstitions. Sometimes even to egregious errors. Faith is purely conviction and commitment and hope. It need not, but often does, lead to superstition. But that kind of faith, if that is what it should be called, need not be religious or called religious or spiritual or an analogy to it of any kind and it need not be anti-religious. But it is certainly not religious. Faith in our commitments to an intelligible concept of hope that a struggle for a better, more caring and more reasonable world will not always be love's labour lost. It need not be illusion or the future of an illusion though it may be; but it is to recognize that it need not be a skepticism, a cynicism or lead us to nihilism. But it is fallibilism. Think of John Dewey in a not so ancient past or of Noam Chomsky now.

To speak of our faith in something may not, and indeed often does not, have anything to do with religion, but to have a steadfast hopeful belief and conviction that there is something and some convictions that we reasonably can and should have that may be regarded by us as being very desirable, and that may with effort, integrity and with persistence that is not only deemed to be desirable but also in actuality be desirable. And that it may be obtained or at least be approximated. For this hopefulness may be enough to be a faith that is not unreasonable but, faith or not, it need not be a matter of religion or anything like it. We should not be Kantian here. There can be no religion within the limits of reason alone.

MacIntyre in effect makes religion larger than life. We do not need religious faith of any kind to so act and live, to reasonably and kindly act and live. Or to act and live our lives rationally. Global warming may overwhelm us. But that standardly is not the case. There is no reason why we cannot do so. And among other things do so without philosophy or pre-philosophical commitments that determine the structure or distinctive philosophical orientations. We can do without religion or faith in religion. We can and indeed should, without religion, engage in a set of practices for our commonweal and for ourselves as well. To be concerned about others is not incompatible with concern for ourselves but very likely it contributes to the nourishment of ourselves as well and that of others. But overriding of this are climate change concerns. It is, to put it mildly, very irrational to give up concerning that and to claim that only a God can save us now. That is to stick our heads in the sand. Christian faith cannot be obtained from the standpoint of reason. Perhaps it cannot be obtained period? But it is often difficult for some of us to free ourselves from religion and do so. Prejudices and ethnocentric beliefs are as

common as blackberries in North Carolina. Genuine rational philosophical enquiries may very well not be of much help. Perhaps we should drop philosophy? The Wittgensteinian in me inclines me in that direction of replacing it with careful reflection concerning how to react on our world sans any philosophical investigations. Something that many sorts of people can well do without an ounce of philosophy.

Hope may well spring eternally from within the human heart. Even though things, in one way or another, seem to become more and more and more devastating as they are becoming in 2016 and 2017. We now live in an increasingly disgusting world. I speak politically, not personally. I live personally well for my age. Our world may become so bad in various ways that we may lose all hope of righting it. It is clear that it is not as MacIntyre asserts that it is our increasing drifting away from a belief in God that causes the troubles. It is our social order. That we must go back to Christian faith is a pure dogmatic assertion on his part.

Perhaps we have nothing coherent here. Still at least MacIntyre has given us no reason to believe that reason requires Christian faith or any other religious faith. Not even the subtler non-theistic faith or the most subtle forms of Theravada Buddhism. It is a pure irrational dogma to just assert, as MacIntyre does, that "reason without Christian faith is always informed by some other faith, characteristically an unacknowledged faith, one that renders its adherents liable to error." One that Christian faith, MacIntyre has it, does not do. It gives us, according to him, the real thing which overcomes all doubt. Why single out and exempt, as MacIntyre does, Christian faith from the possibility of error? Such a groundless claim reveals his arbitrary false assertionism. An assertionism that is plainly entirely dogmatic. Something that once he was exempt from.

By contrast to MacIntyre, fallibilism at least seems inescapable. And not at all irrational or even non-rational. Moreover, it need not lead to alienation, or despair, or nihilism.

#### IV

MacIntyre makes it evident that his aim is to articulate and defend, in his God, Philosophy, Universities, the Catholic philosophical tradition and Catholicism. What he writes in Chapter 18 and 19 of his book is of crucial concern here though it will conflict with the views of many philosophers and other critical intellectuals. That, of course, is alright if he can coherently defend them. My claim is that he does not. And I expect it cannot be done. In chapter 18, he enters the task by considering Pope John Paul II's Encyclical Fides et Ratio. It begins with the Pope's characterisation of "what philosophy is and the place of philosophy in human life" (MacIntyre 2009, 165). It is a central claim of Fides et Ratio, as MacIntyre puts it, "that the Catholic philosophical enterprise is not just one more competing form of philosophical enquiry. It [Catholic philosophy] is within the Catholic philosophical enterprise, when it is true to its own highest standards, that philosophy is carried on. What even is philosophy?" (MacIntyre 2009, 165). (I leave aside what its highest standards are and whether they meet the Pope's standards.) I consider specifically its account of what is philosophy. Fides et Ratio remarks that every culture proposes something concerning the order of things, about its own nature in the order of things and its place in the order of things. Philosophy, Fides et Ratio holds, comes on the scene as the project of addressing some questions systematically and persistently, and it does so in the interest of aiming at truth through the exercise of reason. In pondering these preoccupations of philosophy, it concerns itself with issues of truth, meaning and

rational justification to ascertain their point and the purpose in the attempt to answer such existential questions. This, of course, is not the whole or, sometimes, at all, what some philosophers philosophically engage in. But at times it has been often enough. It is its central concern. Its task, according to Pope John Paul II, is to set the right answer here.

However, the Catholic tradition does not leave this entirely up to philosophers. The Catholic Church, through its assigned leader, has a crucial function here. The Pope, most obviously and essentially. However, the magisterium as well oversees whether philosophers carry out the tasks of philosophy adequately (MacIntyre 2009, 166). Jesus Christ, it is said by the Catholic Church, is to be God's self-revelation to the world and that it is by Jesus that His doctrine is presupposed by philosophy. But this does not make philosophy redundant. But a questioning of Christian faith is always illegitimate. God's self-revelation is not to be challenged or modified by philosophy. If the questioning by a work of philosophy or by a philosopher's questioning tries to challenge God's self-revelation, that challenging is always an error and the questioning must always be rejected. Indeed, it may be condemned by the Church anyhow. That is plainly something that is irrational, at least for most modern philosophers and critical intellectuals engaged in modernity. But it was not so for them in the Middle Ages. This is probably one of the reason why MacIntyre so deplores modernity. Modernity has its problems, but that part clearly is not one of them.

On pages 168-170 MacIntyre makes the point – a Catholic influenced point – that those “who exercise the teaching magisterium – the teaching function and the authority of the Catholic Church – on occasion can and will intervene in philosophical debate and enquiry. Where it presents a presupposition – an overestimation it considers – of the



power of reason. Idealism and positivism both are a threat to Catholic enquiry, MacIntyre has it (MacIntyre, 2009: 165). This sounds draconian and dictatorial to me. It isn't like prohibition of hate speech. But it is authoritarian. MacIntyre however claims that this is necessary to hold back those philosophers, for example idealists, positivists and Nietzscheans, who try some answers to matters to which only theologians could properly speak (MacIntyre 2009, 169). This gives theology binding supervision powers over philosophy. Religious thought, indeed a certain religious thought where it obtains, towers over secular thought and indeed over all other thought. This is how the Catholic Church thinks things ought to be and would be if in fact it had the power. Fortunately, it does not. No one and no institution should have such authority or power over such matters.

MacIntyre appears to resist the claim of the Church, to give a certain autonomy to philosophy. That, of course, is desirable. But he is actually unclear here. He rightly asks how philosophy and theology are related. One thing that philosophy must do is to educate theologians and priests. Catholic philosophers must find a way to do that. But they must be careful how it is done. It can be problematic. Look back to Aquinas' time. There was then a conflict between Augustinian theologians and Aristotelian philosophers. These theologians rejected Aristotelianism itself as something that was inherent to religious enquiry. But it was thought by Aquinas that Aristotelianism was not in conflict with Catholic faith and Catholic theology.

This controversy remained a rather muddled matter and continued to be for Catholics, including Catholic philosophers. However, in the end theology and religion won out. The Pope and the magisterium has the last say for Catholics. MacIntyre writes for a Catholic Christian that it is by Jesus Christ alone that we are able to see humanity

perfected (MacIntyre 2009, 167). Religion, theologically articulated, is sovereign even if, as Kierkegaard said, we have to crucify our intellects. MacIntyre fears and rejects Fideism, as well as modernity. Yet he is clearly committed in effect to Roman Catholic Christianity. There is plainly a contradiction here.

Is this on my part the hobgoblin of little minds? What are philosophers to do? MacIntyre tells us. I quote in extenso from him from his God, Philosophy, Universities (2009) and then carefully critically explore what he says concerning what philosophers are to do with MacIntyre's remarks.

They principally concern either the starting point of that enterprise or the nature of that final end, the achievement of which would perfect and complete it. The starting points, as I already emphasized, are from thinkers in different cultures, each posing in their own idioms what are recognizably the same or closely related existential questions. The final end of the Catholic philosophical enterprise is the achievement of an adequate understanding of those realities about which the initial questions were posed. So to uphold any philosophical thesis or argument that denies significance to those initial questions, by asserting or implying that they are either meaningless or unanswerable, would deprive the Catholic philosophical enterprise of its point and purpose. So too would the upholding of any philosophical thesis or argument that is at odds with the conception of the kind of understanding to be achieved and the kind of truth to be attained, if the Catholic philosophical enterprise is to achieve its goals. Hence the papal condemnations of relativism, positivism, and idealism are not arbitrary. For these are all philosophical doctrines that, for those who embrace them, make it impossible either to begin where the Catholic philosophical enterprise begins or to end where those engaged in that enterprise aim and hope to end.

Yet someone may object: Is this not a case of someone outside philosophy dictating conclusions to philosophers? The encyclical claims to recognize the autonomy of philosophy, but surely it makes nonsense of this claim by its insistence on this exercise of the church's teaching authority. To which the answer is: No. It is for philosophers and only for philosophers to judge what the conclusions of their arguments and the outcomes of their enquiries are. But if philosophers seem to have reached conclusions that are incompatible with those presupposed by the Catholic faith, they will thereby have put in question both their faith and the Catholic philosophical enterprise. And if on reflection they affirm those same conclusions, they will have—at least in this respect—separated themselves both from the Catholic faith and from the Catholic philosophical enterprise. It is this that

it is the duty of those who exercise the teaching authority of the church to point out to philosophers. They have a duty to do so, just because of their care for the truths of the Catholic faith. It is entirely up to philosophers to determine how they should respond to such declarations, including those of *Fides et Ratio*.

It is not irrelevant that, from the standpoint of Catholic teaching, philosophical reflection and enquiry are activities of crucial importance for human beings in every culture. This puts Catholic teaching seriously at odds with the dominant culture of secularized modernity, for which philosophy is generally understood as just one more specialized form of academic activity, important perhaps for those whose interests incline them toward that sort of thing, but something that has little relevance to practical affairs, something that can safely be ignored by the huge majority of humankind, that is in no way an indispensable part of an adequate education. Yet it is the claim of the church that these attitudes toward philosophy themselves have philosophical presuppositions, presuppositions that, if left unarticulated and uncriticized, make it impossible to think purposefully and rigorously about those existential questions to which the acknowledgement God's self-revelation provides the only adequate response. The tasks that confront Catholics in the face of this cultural challenge are both theological and philosophical. For philosophical enquiry is needed "to clarify the relationship between truth and life, between event and doctrinal truth, and above all between transcendent truth and humanly comprehensible language." So concludes the seventh and last chapter of the encyclical. What then should the response of Catholic philosophers to *Fides et Ratio* be? How in their terms should they define their present situation, in relation to the conflicts and disagreements within the Catholic tradition, in relation to their conflicts and disagreements with philosophers outside of and antagonistic to the Catholic tradition, and in relation to the cultures that they inhabit? What is it to be a Catholic philosopher now? (MacIntyre, 2009: 170-172)

I begin by first going to his last chapter. There he articulates "What is it to be a Catholic philosopher now?" He does this well and clearly. But does he also answer or try to: "Why be a Catholic philosopher?" and "What, if anything, is the task or at least a central task of philosophy?" Does he give a convincing or adequate account of the relation between theology and philosophy? I shall argue that he fails in all these matters.

But I will initially say something about what he says about universities, which is not my theme here, but anyway I shall briefly consider it. For what he says is significant.

There I think he is largely and importantly on the mark. But it is independent of what he says about religion and his defense of Thomism and the Catholic tradition in philosophy.

An utter secularist, a thoroughgoing atheist, could and should, I believe and will briefly argue, say much the same thing as MacIntyre does about universities. But it has nothing to do with Catholicism, Thomism or religion. Like John Henry Newman, MacIntyre had a lot to say about universities. He says much the same thing as Newman did. MacIntyre has interesting and significant things to say about universities, that were quite independent of his religious beliefs or any other religious beliefs. Here I am in accord with MacIntyre. And we are both influenced by John Henry Newman, a talented Catholic intellectual.

I will say a few things about MacIntyre on universities and then return to my critique of MacIntyre's Thomism and theism and on what he says in defense of religion generally, particularly of Catholicism and more specifically of Thomism.

But first, and briefly, for MacIntyre on universities. He sees a shift in higher education to what he calls the research university, particularly the great ones, e.g. the University of California, the University of Michigan, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, New York University and the University of Chicago, with their graduate schools, medical schools, law schools, post-graduate enterprises that provide "the specialized and professionalized human resources and skills needed in any advanced capitalist society" (China included) (MacIntyre 2009, 173). They produce "not only specialized and professional search scientists, but also physicians, economists, lawyers, MBAs, engineers, and experts in public relations and advertising" (MacIntyre 2009, 173). Except

perhaps for the last two, they are all necessary for a modern society. Undergraduate college and university education has unfortunately become principally a prologue to such a specialized education. It is largely, in effect, a servant to it. That has become a misfortune. Undergraduate skills and undergraduate education should instead have a different emphasis. Undergraduate education should not be such, or better just such, a prologue to later specialization but a wide-ranging aid to its students becoming informed and hopefully reflective of human beings and more generally concerning our humanity: and about generally an appreciation of science and about an understanding and appreciation of our social, political and literary lives. They should not end up in the human arena as mere specialized persons but as reflectively informed human beings concerning ways of life and with an intellectual grip on how to live. That is not what students get now in university. But they used to get something of this not so long ago. I experienced it in teaching as a young assistant professor at Amherst College, a first-rate four-year college where I taught philosophy in the early 1960's. It had a desirable and distinctive programme for the freshman and sophomore years for all their students. Except for their choice of a foreign language course, they all took the same Humanities-oriented program for two years. It included physics, biology, history and another human science, I forget now which one. They also had a year-long course on the Humanities starting with Homer and going on to other important figures such as Plato and Greek dramatists, Thucydides, Dante, Shakespeare, Jane Austen, to Goethe, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. The figures sometimes varied from year to year, but they were always of similar significance and variety. It was staffed by professors from different disciplines. Most of them, like myself, had to teach many authors who were not from their own disciplines, so such was a general

learning experience for students and professors alike. The author we were reading in the course at the time with the guidance of some expert on the subject we were teaching the discussion. This whole thing was a learning experience and an influencing one all around for students and a variety of professors from various disciplines in the Humanities: professors from liberal arts, historians to philosophers and to professors from other different disciplines in Humanities. Only once did I trained in philosophy, but with an English literature undergraduate major discuss a philosopher, namely Plato's Republic. I found the Peloponnesian War, which we discussed in the week after discussing Plato, much more interesting. Perhaps a token for me of things to come.

It was made clear to the students that we were not usually authorities on the subject we were teaching but mere older human beings of a learned sort reflectively discussing these books with them. Students and professors alike were humans educating ourselves.

What I have just discussed as what I once did in the 1950's and 1960's in Amherst was a very important program in College and University life. I do not know if it still obtains. But now it, or something like it, is rare on the ground in Colleges and universities. MacIntyre puts the matter well.

What disappears from view in such universities, and what significantly differentiates them from many of their predecessors, is twofold: first, any large sense of and concern for enquiry into the relationships between the disciplines and, second, any conception of the disciplines as each contributing to a single shared enterprise, one whose principal aim is neither to benefit the economy nor to advance the careers of its students, but rather to achieve for teachers and students alike a certain kind of shared understanding. Universities have become, perhaps irremediably, fragmented and partitioned institutions, better renamed "multiversities," as Clark Kerr suggested almost fifty years ago. I remarked of Aquinas, and I could equally well have remarked of Newman, that his conception of the university was informed by his conception of the universe. By contrast the conception of the university presupposed by and embodied in the institutional

forms and activities of contemporary research universities is not just one that has nothing much to do with any particular conception of the universe, but one that suggests strongly that there is no such thing as the universe, no whole of which the subject matters studied by the various disciplines are all parts or aspects, but instead just a multifarious set of assorted subject matters.

The contemporary research university is, therefore, by and large a place in which certain questions go unasked or rather, if they are asked, it is only by individuals and in settings such that as few as possible hear them being asked. Yet some of those questions would be provoked by minimal reflection upon the activities of those at work within the disciplinary boundaries that hedge around the enquiries officially recognized by and within research universities. Consider the range of things that are said about human beings from the standpoints of each of the major disciplines.

From the standpoint of physics human beings are composed of fundamental particles interacting in accordance with the probabilistic generalizations of quantum mechanics. From that of chemistry we are the sites of chemical interactions, assemblages of elements and compounds. From that of biology we are multicellular organisms belonging to species each of which has its own evolutionary past. From that of historians we are intelligible only as emerging from long histories of social and economic transformations. From that of economists we are rational profit-maximizing makers of decisions. From that of psychology and sociology we shape and are shaped by our perceptions, our emotions, and our social roles and institutions. And from that of students of literature and the arts it is in the exercise of our various imaginative powers that we exhibit much that is distinctive about human beings. But how do all these relate to each other? In what does the unity of a human being consist? And how should the findings of each of these disciplines contribute to our understanding of ourselves and of our place in nature?

It was to philosophy that in the past the task of formulating and reformulating, of answering and reanswering these questions would have fallen. The assumption made in assigning this task to philosophy was that the practitioners of each of these other disciplines will be unable to understand the full significance of what they are doing and what they are discovering, until and unless they achieve a philosophical understanding of their own discipline and of its relationship to other disciplines. The peculiar contention of theistic philosophers, whether Catholic, Jewish, or Moslem, was that philosophers would be unable to carry out this task, unless they recognized that other disciplines—and philosophy itself—can only be adequately understood in their relationship to theology for two reasons. First, it is only through the relationships of the different parts of and aspects of the universe to God that its unity and intelligibility can be adequately grasped. Second, because the unity of the human being and the nature of human beings also requires a theistic perspective for its full comprehension.

Yet in the contemporary research university neither philosophy nor theology can find their due place. Theology has for the most part been expelled altogether from

the research university. Philosophy has been marginalized and in two ways. First it is at best treated as no more than one discipline among all the others, a discipline with no more claim to the attention of students and their teachers than any other discipline has. Insofar as it produces students well prepared for their further careers, it is valued just as every other such discipline is valued. But the notion that human beings need philosophy, that philosophy articulates and moves toward answering questions the asking of which is crucial for human flourishing, this notion is wholly alien to the ethos of the research university. And this is not the only way in which philosophy is marginalized. (MacIntyre, 2009: 174-176)

I learned a lot from that experience of teaching at Amherst College and I expect the students did as well, though not always from me. I never swung on to Dante or even to Cervantes. Both of whom I had to teach. Though I did later on to Cervantes in my intellectual life. I expect I was not very able then at discussing either of them in my classes. But generally, that teaching was engaging and to everyone's benefit. It didn't advance the students' preparation for their reach future. But I did help them to reflect on their lives and on life more broadly. In such courses, students advanced their senses of our humanity and had an opportunity to become more cosmopolitan.

So much for talk of universities and of what they should be. MacIntyre is insightful on such matters. I return now to MacIntyre on what he takes to be philosophy and its tasks and its relation to religion.

After his well saying that I have quoted in extenso above he goes on to say things about the tasks of philosophy that very much need questioning. He takes, knowledgeable that he is, an ethnocentric view of the tasks of philosophy. It would not have gone well with Descartes, Spinoza, Hobbes, Hume, Kant, Sedgwick, Dewey, Carnap, Quine, C.I. Lewis, Austen, Wittgenstein, Putnam or Kripke. Or another philosophical ball game on the Stoics, Cynics, Epicurians or Hadot or even still others such as Sartre, Heidegger, Jaspers or Derrida. The tasks of philosophy are a 'splendid thing' but with no essences,



or substantive cores. The philosophical Archimedean point points to no substantive core and no socio-cultural or history transcending viewpoint. It is not even the case that it was centrally, if at all, that it came to be that the lack of answering or trying to answer the question of the last above question concerning and formulating and reformulating or answering to or transcending the questions raised in the above quotation from MacIntyre. It is a confusion on MacIntyre's part to say the practitioners of the disciplines mentioned in the above quotation that "they will be unable to understand the full significance of what they are doing and what they are discovering, until and unless they achieve a philosophical understanding of their own discipline and its relationship to other disciplines" (MacIntyre 2009, 175). That is a philosophical pretention and delusion or at least an illusion on MacIntyre's part. He adds another delusion/illusion when he claims that philosophy itself "can only be adequately understood in their relation to theology" (MacIntyre 2009, 175). That adds an illusion to an illusion. He gives few reasons for his claim, namely that "it is only through the relationships of the different parts of and aspects of the universe to God that its unity and intelligibility can be adequately grasped. Second, because the unity of the human being and the nature of human beings also requires a theistic perspective for its full comprehension." (MacIntyre 2009, 175) Here we have on MacIntyre's part two bold assertions with no indication of their possible justification or establishment or even of their likelihood. MacIntyre's claims here are what some contemporary philosophers have called arm waving. Such a remark is not without reason. No justificatory vindication is in sight on MacIntyre's part.

MacIntyre is very aware of the depth of the disagreement that attains between philosophers of different orientations and as well as of their apparent irresolvability.

Philosophers, however, seem to gang around their own kind. Many not caring about the depth of disagreement between them or even considering whom, if anyone, is or can be telling it like it is or even nearly so. Perhaps, very perhaps, there is no such thing in philosophy as a telling it like it is. Getting things right. MacIntyre remarks that there appears in almost all cases to be pre-philosophical commitments for any philosophical commitments, but I think that taking leave of philosophy is the way to go. In effect, Marx tried but failed to do so. But the line of when it is pre-philosophical and when it is philosophical is sometimes hard to determine. Importantly for me, this is so for what George Santayana called matters of animal faith. Still these commitments are something that themselves rest on animal faith or if 'faith' here is a mistaken term then use animal instinct or attunement. Something that any human can have.

My animal faith is groundless though rooted, and for me pervasive. Just as is MacIntyre's religious despotism for him, Is this not so for all philosophical commitments? But if we do not rest here on banalities or truisms such as water is needed by everyone if they are to live. It is very difficult to come up with paradigms that are not banalities or truisms that no reasonable person could deny. Is the very idea of a 'reasonable person' utterly up for cultural grabs? Is it just a cultural matter? Is what counts as reasonable always ethnocentric? If we are careful, will we realize it is so? Some people will even question that. Still, time and place considerations are not escapable if they are substantive matters not banal. But does that not trump objectivity? I think not. Does thinking make it so? Finally, except as arbitrarily claimed that seems at least to be inescapable when it comes to thinking beyond one's time and place. But is this just my own complaint? Or inadequacy?

There is something that both MacIntyre and I realize is non-philosophical but necessary for the very doing of philosophy or at least for giving it a task. But this is also something that philosophy itself cannot genuinely settle though it has not infrequently tried. With inescapable philosophical pre-dispositions and pre-commitments it is where in various ways philosophies and philosophers begin and it is also where they end. Moreover, it is something that is very difficult to push aside. Here we have what George Santayana called animal faith. That is usually where matters begin and end. It is arguably both crucial and inescapable then. They are philosophy's implied signification basis. Are any of our pre-philosophical commitments, presuppositions determinately plausible or reasonable where they are to end or to stay? Does anything have a distinctly rational hold or grasp on the world? Does anyone become a 'higher agent' – Nietzsche's dream – who can tell it 'like it is'? Where it sticks for anyone, anywhere at any time in history? It seems not. Does anyone have a special rational hold? Well are they all just unarguable philosophical or pre-philosophical commitments? Some have an anomalist stature. We should be skeptical about any of this.

Are any of our various pre-philosophical presuppositions and commitments reasonable or rational? Or required by reason? Well they are not philosophically justifiable for they are necessary for us to even philosophize. They are what we often deeply assume when we do philosophy and before we can even do it. That is where, as Wittgenstein put it, our spades are turned. But we need to take cognizance that there are various turnings. And at least seemingly incapable of a cross-country validation.

These pre-philosophical conceptions vary considerably for different philosophies and philosophers. Mine and MacIntyre's differences here are very different philosophically

but we also fundamentally have different pre-conceptions or pre-commitments of philosophy. For philosophy we have very fundamental pre-philosophical commitments as well as resultantly our fundamental philosophical commitments.

Mine seem plainly reasonable and rational to me and MacIntyre's central ones seem unreasonable and irrational to me. And vice-versa between us. And often when a pseudo-Wittgensteinian goes on about God he goes on in what seems to me very mistakenly to be assuring himself with something that itself is like a trivial and artificial problem, as when we ask whether sense-data can have a back ride. But I speak of pseudo-Wittgensteinianism not of Wittgensteinianism.

Some faint scent lingers over my last remarks concerning (and perhaps expressing) skepticism, relativism, subjectivism, ethnocentrism, historicism, culturalism. Call it what you will. But absolutism it is not. At any rate it seems in some ways untoward and applies equally to me and to MacIntyre. And if either of us are near to being on the mark here, much of the above matters must be brushed aside except for some rationally reconstructed form of historicism.

The world seems at least to be moving to the political and social right. For me this is a matter of bitterness and a determination to resist. At this moment in the USA there is at its head an authoritarian clown who badly needs some psychiatric treatment. We humans do not get just an absolutism: the certainty that the Catholic Church magisterium claims the failure of this and rejection of it clearly undermines MacIntyre. 'Absolutism' has zero denotation. We do not even understand what it needs to be for it to have a denotation. For what is substantive we are caught in a historicism aside from truisms that

are often banalities as well, e.g. all humans need food and water. What we humans believe, some truisms and banalities aside, are historicized rather than absolute or utterly cross-culturally true. This plainly goes for Papal theological proclamations and a proclamation of the Catholic magisterium as well, though their proclaimers would not admit it. Even matters of substance that for a long time have been taken to be substantive universal truths have been shown to be false, e.g. 'nothing travels further than the speed of light'. Such scientific claims are often thought to be absolute truths of substance but even they are subject to historical disenfranchisement. Contingency seems to be substantive and never falsified. Though seeming to be false by a rarish few philosophers who still go in for metaphysics, epistemology and ethical and some political philosophy theory or theological theory. Some truisms and banalities aside and even they are diminishing. We do not get ahistorical objectivities. Absolutism meets the butcher's block. What Spinoza could reasonably believe we cannot.

Where and when we were born and now and to the extent we are educated and otherwise enculturated determine what we believe and that has radically changed over our long human history. What kind of education or lack thereof we have had, what life experience we have had configures for us the beliefs we have. Contingency acts very differently in the human mind and into human acting. There is no escaping or leaping over that. Think of the very differences of mind of the educated and of the Trump advocates and indeed of Trump himself. On whom education did not work.

There is no philosophical, no theological, no pre-philosophical, no pre-theological, no pre-scientific, let alone the scientific perspective, no pragmatic scientific method, no common-sense way, über-common-sense way (if there is such a thing). We always have

contingency in varying degrees along the way and all the way down. But even that itself has not been established to be an absolute truth. Still, we must be careful about self-reference. We should not talk of 'absolute contingency'.

A big difference between MacIntyre and me is that he thinks belief in God and a perfected Catholic belief in God is reasonable. And he does not think that it is contingent matters. If we reason properly, he believes, we can escape from contingency. I, by contrast, am a fallibilist through and through. Nor do I think even for a moment that only God can save us. There is no such salvation or indeed any ultimate orientation. But that does not mean that life is meaningless, that there is no meaning in life or that there is no purpose in life or to life. But even to think that is so is not itself to go teleological and believe that there is a purposeful end to life. I think there is no possibility to escape contingency and no need to have faith that there is some fuzzy kind of understanding of what that would be. But that does not mean that we cannot make sense of our lives and of a social order of kindness or just of plain decency. Though it may be just to believe that it has never been attained. We featherless bipeds have had beliefs that have repeatedly been amiss here. Often grossly so, about that. We, if we are at all realistic, may well be skeptical that anything like that will even be a social reality, will even be a key part of our social practices, while all the time still hoping that I am wrong here. Though we should realize that some places go a little way in that direction, Stockholm more than Chicago. But examining the whole social order of the world is clearly not encouraging. We will reasonably fear that the belief that anything such as a world of kindness and decency is no more than a pious illusion. And this, of course, will deeply sadden us. It is tough medicine to take that this is the way things are and that it may well be just the way

that they always will be. Think of this illusionism when we think of Obama's great late (2017) last presidential address. A powerful and moving address for even one like me who is skeptical about Obama. A powerful and moving address that unified people and moved them to have faith in democracy and in the strength and goodness of the United States' political order. Even I who regard the USA as a plutocracy rather than a democracy was moved by the speech that was saying something about what the USA should be. Moreover, it was not emptiness except for its crude ideology of Make America great again of Trump. Obama's address brought on occasion both tears and smiles and confident nods from a good number of a mostly reasonably educated and often a realistically world engrained audience. But in a cool hour we should and very likely will recognize sadly that this is not how in fact it is or is likely to be or that the world Obama governed over was. Though I am not saying or suggesting this is the way Obama wanted it to be. It may be that hope springs eternally within the human heart. Perhaps there will come to be a considerable number of us will struggle for a world of human caring, kindness and decency and hopefully with an understanding and determination to do what it takes to make such a world to be in order to achieve this in spite of all the horrors we are daily aware of. If it were, as it is not, just a matter of being merely a neutral observer betting person on what will obtain I certainly should not bet on the world ceasing to be hellish. But I am determinately not such a neutral observer of the world. I am a committed and determined agent struggling to change it for the better. But I am skeptical about whether that is or is likely to obtain. But that does not limit my determination to struggle on, to soldier on as a friend of mine once put it.

I do not sneer or even go ironical at that. Far from it. Though I am bigger on hope there than I am on expectation. I also hope that I never become so skeptical about our social and political lives for it to be the case that all hope dries out in me. I hope that I am mistaken about such depressing views. Views that will trump us forever. But while I become increasingly skeptical about whether a world of kindness, decency and caring will ever come to be, I will never be without a determined commitment to struggle with my pen and my voice against the horrible world we have. I will never become a nihilist or dystopian. I remain and will continue to remain committed to the struggle for a better life with thorough determination to use whatever powers I still have for there to be an order of kindness, decency and enlightenment to obtain and hopefully to flourish in our world. But I do not write triumphantly as MacIntyre does about Catholicism and Thomism. I am bitterly aware that there is plenty of indifference to and denial of the moral horror in our world. We are not Joseph Conrad. I will struggle against this indifference and denial with the only power I now have left: my pen and my voice. With the dwindling powers of old age. Otherwise, I would also be out on the streets as I once was against the Vietnam War. Another US atrocity.

My determination and commitment to struggle on for a world of human caring, kindness and of enlightenment as fully as there can be in the world. Think of the Rohingyas.

However, there is too many, at the extent of human indifference and moving to the other corner hatred in the world. For many, it is deeply ingrained as is their blanking out climate change disaster. But there are people who care and do not blot out their struggle against climate disaster. It may be love's labor lost but they put all their energies and



abilities into it. Capitalism is an aid to climate disaster as well as all kinds of disasters. And it often savagely exports as well as dumbs them down. The news available to ordinary people is diminishing. Still, I believe that we can have both a moral grip and an empirical grip on what the world is and is likely to come to be. Indeed, in both cases, a cognitive grip. With those two grips, but most particularly with the latter one, we will come to have an awareness of our being in a political wilderness. Of our entrapment that is at the will of capitalist power with its abundant use of ideology over our population that is crucial in their entrapment. The 1% rates viciously though usually in disguised ways over the other 99%. The lower it goes down the social ladder, the more horrible it gets. Still, the capitalist ways, in many ways, are in deceitful ways entrapping. But as yet we have not been blessed with a brave new world. Capitalism's grip is powerful but not as yet all-encompassing.

But back to MacIntyre and Roman Catholic philosophy. MacIntyre tells us they have as their pre-philosophical commitments the revealed claims of the Catholic Church and declared authority of the Catholic Church more generally. This means that for Catholic philosophers, including of course MacIntyre, that their philosophical enquiries are inescapably of a certain determinate nature. Namely, and centrally, what they take to be the truths that the Catholic Church takes about the existence and nature of God and the soul, as well as certain beliefs that the Church takes to be the certainties about what they claim to be the natural law and eternal life. Catholic philosophers, MacIntyre further says, have a kind of self-knowledge many modern believers do not have. Sometimes secular beliefs and sometimes certain philosophical beliefs – Spinozistic, Kantian, Nietzschean and Hegelian beliefs for example – that cannot be theirs. It is a strange thing

at best to call Catholic ‘knowledge’ a kind of self-knowledge. Rather, to put it accurately, they are matters that their Catholic indoctrination (enculturation if you will) influences them. Sometimes tells them that they must go or not go in a certain direction. They must or must not philosophically, or in any other way, go or not in certain directions.

Here, as Catholics, they must obey the ex Cathedra claims of the Pope and that of magisterium. This obtains for beliefs, philosophical or otherwise, that are not in accordance with their Catholic proclamations. They must be rejected by Catholics and non-Catholics who hold any contrary beliefs are to be judged to be in error.

As philosophers, Catholics must seek a good answer to what it is to be a human being. This will require “an adequate account of how and why human beings are capable of the relevant kind of self-knowledge.” MacIntyre continues: “Such an account will have to integrate what we can learn about the nature and constitution of human beings from physicists, chemists, and sociologists, with the kind of understanding of human beings that only theology can afford. What form would such an account take?” (MacIntyre 2009, 177). I find this very puzzling as well as very questionable. From some, perhaps most, sciences we can of course learn about human beings. Perhaps most particularly from the last three on his list but also, crucially, from anthropologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, and from psychoanalysts. But also and deeply importantly, and moving away, but not against science, from a lucid and varied reading of literature, that is where I learned the most. We can also learn that from some philosophers, though not from others. For example, from Rawls, but not from Quine. Though I certainly do not deny that from Quine we can importantly learn other perhaps useful things. We can perhaps sometimes learn something even from some theologians. We, for example, can learn something from

Pascal, Reinholt Niebuhr and Karl Barth though it is not something, pace MacIntyre, that only theologians can know or understand. There is no special theological knowledge of the Divine. Nor any knowledge of the Divine. There is clearly nothing by the way of theological knowledge and, even more clearly, nothing that only theologians can understand. This includes something that, *pace* MacIntyre, is something that is a kind of knowledge that a Pope proclaiming *ex Cathedra* to be the case or that the Catholic magisterium or any magisterium. We can never know that what they so say must just be accepted by everyone as the real 'transcendent truth' or any kind of truth or some unquestionable warrantability. Call it what you will but for Catholics it is unquestionable. Even if they only dimly understand it. MacIntyre's claim is probably thought to be unchallengeable, but even if it is not, it is plainly false or, at the very least, there is no "kind of understanding as that only theology can afford." (MacIntyre 2009, 177). Or something that we can learn, learn only from a Pascal or Reinholt Niebuhr. But if not from them, for MacIntyre, we certainly can learn from Augustine something that only theologians can know. Something that we can learn from Augustine that Aquinas must just take hook line and sinker that neither his nor anyone else's philosophy can correctly gainsay. It is supposedly something that must just be accepted and not questioned. Something that philosophy must not, and indeed in reality cannot, challenge justifiably intellectually or that in any other way cannot correctly be challenged. What a pope says ex cathedra or the magisterium says about philosophy or religion or anything cannot be justifiably challenged. But there is nothing like a cartesian certain Archimedean point. Pace MacIntyre, there is no substantive certainty, whether it is claimed by a Pope or not

or a magisterium or not. There is no such thing. No such certainty. We human beings are stuck with contingency. To echo Wittgenstein, that is where our spades are turned.

However MacIntyre will not and I think mistakenly will not settle down here though he is not innocent of Wittgenstein. For MacIntyre, any belief system or set of social practice or path of faith, animal or otherwise, that runs against the Catholic fundamental proclamations that I have mentioned just above must be false. Or so MacIntyre claims and the Catholic Church claims. It is not for them just where their spades are turned, though their spades are indeed turned there. But the fundamental Catholic truth claims are said to be eternally and absolutely true or so it is claimed by them and presumably even by MacIntyre, though paradoxically and inconsistently where 'eternal truths' can be subject to such Papal change. We are reminded of George Orwell's 1984, the eternal is not eternal. Things that are not subject to change do change. MacIntyre's proclamations here are an incoherent dogmatism that is bluntly in error.

MacIntyre however is right in saying that we – indeed, we, philosophers – are on the mark in saying that when we try to understand a human achievement of something that is a kind of understanding “that will enable us to distinguish what is worth caring about a very great deal from what is worth caring about a good deal less and both from what is not worth caring about at all” (MacIntyre 2009, 178). This is something, as I am confident that MacIntyre recognizes, that is just how it goes here is frequently contested. And for it to be contestable is right on the mark. Though this is not so for fundamental Catholic doctrine. Still contestably is so for many things we seek to address. And it is sometimes for something that it is important to usually achieve. I am in tune with MacIntyre here. However, he goes on to say what is baffling to me and not only because I believe it is

plainly mistaken. MacIntyre writes just after the above quotation: “So there is a crucial relationship between metaphysics and ethics. For it is only insofar as we understand the universe, including ourselves, as dependent on God for our existence that we are also able to understand ourselves as directed toward God and whether our directedness toward God is at all necessary for us to be able to be caring beings” (MacIntyre 2009, 178).

I do not ascertain and I do not believe that it is just for me that Augustinian thinking or anything like that is required for caring. Or that there are other sound arguments or any plausible arguments like that, that show or even go any of the way toward showing that or any thing even having a close relationship to that. Is it just because I am in the ethnically wrong time and place that I do not see that? Certainly that has something to do with it. But it is not, by any means, the whole story. Is it even reasonable to believe anything like that at all? At any rate, MacIntyre has us again relying on pure assertions. On something albeit with a very questionable rationale (MacIntyre 2009, 136). The Catholic Church’s magisterium or anything else like it does not give us any good reason at all for believing in Christianity or in any similar religion, e.g. Judaism or Islam or for not being through and through secular. We should not claim, as MacIntyre does, that without such religious beliefs, we cannot escape alienation. It is not true that without belief in God we must be alienated. There are plenty of Buddhists without belief in God who are not alienated and plenty of such utter secularists. Theism has no privilege here.

We are a long way from being able to establish God’s existence or even the evidence of God’s intelligibility, desirability or the plausibility of believing in God or of being of the Christian faith or for that matter of any other theistic faith. However, MacIntyre just

asserts that the desirability, the rationality, and the intelligibility of these things in both The Tasks of Philosophy (2006) and God, Philosophy, Universities (2009). But the very existence of God and even the intelligibility of the very concept where God is not being or even if somehow God exists for sound arguments for his benevolent nature. Our world does not evidence or in any way establish God's existence. God is not some she or he that can even in principle be benevolent or be malevolent.

The Catholic tradition maintains that God is not a being, nor a he or she, nor an it, nor even any kind of being at all. God is very different from Zeus. Even a special being assuming that we understand what that is. But instead, God is supposed by Thomists to be Being as such. God is not even the being of being. But that, whatever God is, is not to be a being that could be benevolent or not, being or not, knowing or not. He is not, knowing or not. Indeed, God is not any kind of a being. He is not our Father who is in Heaven. To say God is love is much like saying Mars is love. It is something that plainly makes no sense at all. It is only a being that could love. We are utterly at sea here. We have nonsense galore.

Pace Nietzsche's Zarathustra, God is not dead. God was never a being who could be dead after being alive. But belief and faith in God should gently wither away as people gradually come to see that the very idea of God is unintelligible or at least incoherent. MacIntyre, though unwittingly, is actually trying to lead us into nonsense. There is nothing like this that can save us now or could love or could, in some ideal future, save us or redeem us.

Nietzsche clearly thought that 'God is dead' is a metaphor. But is it even that? For it to be a metaphor, it must be at least possible to say what the alleged metaphor is a metaphor of. But we could only say this if we could say something intelligible like God is a being, but this we cannot do. If we say 'God is our heavenly father' or 'God is love', we have another metaphor. We can with God-talk gain metaphorical status if we could at least in principle say non-metaphorically what is meant by 'God', but then we cannot do without characterizing God as a being and that we can only do by making 'God' like 'Santa Claus', an anthropomorphic reality. There we get plain falsehood, not incoherence or some mix of incoherence and falsehood.

MacIntyre is really on to something here that is indeed true and importantly so, but seldom is acknowledged. There is, as far as I can see, only one hope – an example type, or counter-example to it that is a trivial one and should be set aside (I shall give an example just after this paragraph and the next). But the very matter of its being, for any serious philosophical matter that there be pre-philosophical convictions, even if most philosophers or other critical agents are not aware of that, is an important matter. Indeed, it is fair to say a vitally important matter.

However, it is important to note that the pre-philosophical convictions that determine the direction of our philosophical beliefs vary over time and place and sometimes between individuals. Mine differ radically from MacIntyre's late in his life beliefs.

Because of these things like being so relativism, I turn now to MacIntyre strictly on philosophy. He claims that outside observers – outside of philosophy that is – anxious to learn which of the contemporary views concerning religion is true or at least which has

the strongest support, would be likely to conclude that it is other than philosophers themselves that can or will determine why particular philosophies take a given set of reasons rather than another set of reasons to be the compelling choice. If we can be tough minded there very much seems to be no compelling choice. There seems to be no such a philosophy or the philosophical point of view.

In all cases, philosophy does not stand by itself. There must always be, MacIntyre concludes, for all philosophers, some pre-philosophical conviction that determines their crucial philosophical assertions, that will set their basic philosophical beliefs and reject any beliefs that conflict with these pre-philosophical convictions. Indeed, they must reject such beliefs or orientations. This cannot be true for all of them for it is plain that philosophers as many other people sometimes change or even abandoned their beliefs. Even fundamental ones. But it is true that our philosophical beliefs are generally structured, even determined, by our most basic pre-philosophical convictions. Pace Kantian-like conceptions, philosophy is not an autonomous matter. In reality, it rests on pre-philosophical convictions.

I shall briefly turn to the alleged counter-example, which I will claim is a genuine one but one obtained at the expense of trivializing philosophy. After that, I shall turn to the claim that there is, for all serious philosophy, a variety of pre-philosophical conceptions that determine their various conflicting ways. But if so, this is devastating for MacIntyre and indeed for philosophy. Perhaps even nihilism comes washing in at least as far as philosophy is concerned. Philosophy is one thing, science is another. Can philosophers' pre-philosophical convictions be criticized? Reasonably and rationally criticized? I think so, but that cannot be a philosophical criticism. That would be self-



contradictory. But what kind of criticism then? Is the answer blowing in the wind? What about science and its facts? Are they blowing with the wind? One of the founders of the newspaper The Guardian had a slogan that said: 'facts are sacred'. That is a very good metaphor. But sometimes, and sometimes in important situations, it is extremely difficult to determine what the facts are.

Now for the exception. Suppose a philosopher says that they like to solve conceptual puzzles that happen to intrigue or at least interest them. I know a philosopher like that. And indeed, there are not just a few such philosophers like that. For them, philosophy has nothing to do with the great issues of our lives or even of life problems. Philosophical problems or just conceptual puzzles that intrigue them or at least interest them. Typical such puzzles – conceptual problems if you will – are 'whether sensi-data have a back ride?', 'Is there an external world?', 'Is salesperson so?', 'Can there be a private language?', 'Is time real?', 'What are colors?', etc. These unfortunately so. Something to give a boring seminar on. Trivial useless puzzles that just happen to intrigue some people. They are lacking in any significance. They may be a lot of fun for some who like solving conceptual puzzles or trying to that happen to intrigue and will exercise their minds. Perhaps help fight off Alzheimer's disease. It is in some ways like that some people like playing chess or doing crossword puzzles. In some ways, they may be good fun. In those ways, even these puzzlements or entrapments may have some value. They may, for example, help people fight off Alzheimer's disease. But usually, this helplessness is of a minimal kind of value. But still doing them is doing a recognizable kind of philosophy. It has a trivial kind of value. But damn good fun for some. However, most philosophy is not like that. Most philosophy has substantive pre-philosophical convictions. Or is this a

part of my wish list? Certainly someone who does philosophy as MacIntyre does or as Nietzsche or I do is alienated from this. But there are very different pre-philosophical convictions. Some very critical of MacIntyre's pre-philosophical pre-conditions as well as his philosophy. What, if any, are his resources for countering this? The same goes for me.

There are very different pre-philosophical convictions. He tries to hold on to his. One's that commit him to the Roman Catholic faith and devastatingly but also firmly to Thomism. My pre-philosophical commitments are anti-philosophical. Sometimes much in the mode of Wittgenstein's anti-philosophical philosophy. A way of reasonably taking leave of philosophy this is a conceptually therapeutic turn. Where it works, we will take leave of philosophy. It was plainly a non-successful self-therapy, for Wittgenstein.

It is a kind of therapy if it works well still let us remain fulsomely emancipatory oriented over cultural, social and political critique. And cross-culturally so. We will be free here among other things of all philosophical dangles metaphorical, epistemological or theoretically moral philosophy. That is the claims of ethical philosophy though this is not a rejection of morality. I am not a nihilist or a pseudo-nihilist.

Some might retort that there are philosophers who just like to resolve conceptual puzzles who also have these pre-philosophical convictions. For them their doing of philosophy must be good fun or at least of intellectual curiosity. These are their philosophical commitments. But these are not pre-philosophical convictions. Let us grant them that they are pre-philosophical interests for some philosophers. But they are philosophers whose philosophy is trivial. Good fun if you like it, but that is all that it is or

can be. It hardly fits anyone's conception of the tasks of philosophy. Am I being an anti-Santa Claus here? Well perhaps, but so be it. We live in an age of confusion and of horror. We intellectuals should not fiddle while Rome burns. Am I just such a fiddler?

MacIntyre holds on to his pre-philosophical convictions. He struggles to hold his. He will understand the affirmations though in these last two writings he does not criticize them. His own pre-philosophical convictions commit him to the Roman Catholic faith and desnaturely but firmly to Thomism. My pre-philosophical convictions are anti-philosophical and a moon away from MacIntyre's. My anti-philosophy is in the mode of therapeutic anti-philosophical ones of Wittgenstein of anti-philosophical philosophy. It was not a successful self therapy for Wittgenstein. He never came even a country mile of being able to take leave of philosophy.

If this conceptual therapy works, you will gain a fulsomely emancipatory capacity for social and political critique improved escape from cultural blockage. It must be a stance free of philosophical danglers. That freedom would be a very thing. It would be very emancipatory. There are of course pre-philosophical convictions and commitments here, but they are not ideologically loaded.

I shall now turn to my claim that MacIntyre's distinctive pre-philosophical convictions and their role are deeply mistaken and thus make his Thomism deeply mistaken as well. But I must beware of the possibility that I may be cherry picking of my beliefs to gainsay MacIntyre. For at least all philosophers, except some trivializing ones, pre-philosophical convictions which set the way of their philosophy is conceived and how they practice it. It "predetermines their philosophical conclusions" (MacIntyre 2009, 177).

I think that what MacIntyre takes to be the case here is right on the mark. Unfortunately, it is also something that most philosophers ignore or just brush away. In this way, no philosophy is autonomous. For Catholic philosophers, including MacIntyre in his later age, with their distinctive pre-philosophical convictions, they assert “certain truths about the existence and nature of God and to certain truths about the natural law” (MacIntyre 2009, 177). It is their pre-philosophical commitment and pre-conceptions that will determine what they can and cannot claim as rightly to be believed philosophically. They cannot contradict or counter-claim fundamental claims of the Catholic Church and still remain Catholics. Moreover, in accordance with their pre-philosophical convictions that other philosophers would be in error.

Whatever way we go, if we don't count the trivialization of philosophy mentioned above, if we philosophize, whatever the positions we take, we will be drawing on, as MacIntyre puts it, on some “set of pre-philosophical convictions and that it is in these that, in the end, predetermine their philosophical conclusions” (MacIntyre 2009, 177). If this is so, as it seems to be to me, we cannot avoid cherry picking. But while this should be disconcerting to philosophers or intellectual enquirers, of which MacIntyre is clearly one, I think what he takes to be the case here is right on the mark if we could do philosophy. I call this and willingly, though of course MacIntyre would not, the sinking of the frequently claimed beliefs of the autonomy of philosophy. Is this also a death warrant? Wittgenstein and Lacan, though for greatly different reasons, would welcome that. Perhaps it also had something to do with Berlin's alleged departure from philosophy. At least this, as MacIntyre recognizes, corners philosophers into their philosophical pre-commitments and convictions. Though even philosophers who recognize that seem not to be bothered

philosophically or even intellectually, let alone morally at that. I think most philosophers ignore that, to their misfortune. Here I am in some ways in accord with MacIntyre.

In this way, no philosophy that is serious is autonomous. Philosophers, whether they recognize it or not, are always reined in by their pre-philosophical convictions. For Catholic philosophers, their pre-philosophical convictions are revealed in their assent “to certain truths about the existence and nature of God and to certain truths about the natural law” (MacIntyre 2009, 177). What should be said instead contra MacIntyre is alleged truths. These matters – these pre-philosophical convictions – are not open to critique by Catholic intellectuals. They must realize that to critique here on their part is forbidden. They are not just taken to perhaps be true by properly informed Catholics. They are matters they must believe. There is no room for doubt and any critique of them. And they must be believed by all Catholics. They are the rock, the foundation, of all Catholic philosophy. They are their philosophical king or queen.

My pre-philosophical convictions sharply conflict with MacIntyre’s as well as with what I have labeled as pseudo-Wittgensteinianism, characterized above. My pre-philosophical convictions are thoroughly secularist of the laicity sort, atheistic (though non-evangelistically so), materialistic and I am a humanist with a morality (not a moral philosophy) rooted in a care for human wellbeing and a world of kindness and a world free of ideology. Something far from the world we have now, either on the caring-kindness side and on the non-ideological side. MacIntyre, by contrast, intransigently believes in God. I plainly do not believe in God or that we need such a belief even as myth or a bolster for our morality. It seems to me that belief in the transcendent or transcendence is absurd. There is no escaping contingency. Though Catholics must

believe there are, as do Christians generally. This way of thinking has been undermined at least since Hobbes and Hume. There are no sound arguments for the existence of God or for God's benevolence. This crucial bit of thinking of the Catholic tradition has been shown to be an utter non-starter. Neither philosophy, nor theology, religion, a pope expressing himself ex cathedra or the magisterium of the Catholic Church give us any sound reason for believing in God and even if God exists, belief in his benevolence is out of order. Our world being so is surely out of order as it is. Something that is utterly evident. Think of 2017 and 2018 Yemen, Syria, migrants sold into slavery in Libya, the Rohingya in Burma.

Copycatting MacIntyre's adaptation of bold assertion, I have here just asserted that God's existence has no sound proof. But elsewhere, I have argued that it cannot be proved. See my Reason and Practice (1971, 146-194). I should add that it was subtitled A Modern Introduction to Philosophy. It was initially based on 48 lectures I gave on television in New York in what was called the semester which tucked away on a sabbatical in Heidelberg. I revised and considerably enlarged it. It was too large for a semester course. I only used it once in a year-long course at the University of Ottawa. But in Polish and Spanish translations, it was widely used. It gives a wide dimension of how I thought philosophy should go. Is it even remotely plausible to say this is all caused by human sin? That does not even begin to face what is at issue here. We have a world which is now not just an age of confusion but an age of horror. Talk of sin, if you like, but it does not begin to be explanatory or an adequate characterization here. We do not have such extensive horror in Trumpland but still, it is now (2017-2018) governed by an ignorant, sexist and megalomaniac monster. If there was a benevolent all-powerful God, could he

let this happen? But God's existence and benevolence aside, the God is an absurd belief, but I am not in the business of criticizing the faithful for believing in God, though I would like gently to help lead them to unbelief in a Godly religion or even into a non-Godly religion. These seem to me to do more harm in the world than good. Belief in God for me is not a matter of concern except where religious matters lead to fanaticism and killing as they not infrequently do. And certainly, I have no nostalgia for religion. I just wish it would get out of the way of people. I agree with Nietzsche that it generally does more harm than good.

Even if MacIntyre should respond by accusing me of historicism, something I would not deny and something that he once accepted. Still, his claims there, while claiming to be universal, are in reality clearly historically and ethnically encoded and encased; the very intelligibility of the concept of God is in question. MacIntyre does not argue or even reason over these issues. MacIntyre is content to assume God's reality, and the Roman Catholic Christian conception of how things are. His last two books are replete with assertions without arguments or even attempted proofs. He describes Roman Catholic beliefs accurately, but without even a gesture at how that reasoning answers or even could answer to reality. He just asserts these central claims. The earlier MacIntyre was not like that. His earlier writings put him firmly in the rostrum of contemporary philosophers. But not his last two books. It reminds me of the saying "a Whig in youth and a Tory in old age". How could there be such a decline into dogmatism? It initially shocked me. Now it merely saddens me.

But I must be careful here. I do my asserting in this writing too. It should not be a matter of pot calling the kettle black. Is this unfortunately a way that matters like these

invariably turn out or at least usually do? I certainly hope not. I had also provided arguments over the difference that obtain between MacIntyre and I. But for all the steps? I would not like it to be that. My readers should end up thinking “Well you pay some money and you take your choice.” I remain a fallibilist, but that does not make me an utter skeptic or relativist all the way down. Or a nihilist, or a dystopian. Are there signs that any of these things are knocking at my door?

What I have been articulating is a kind of contextualism and situationalism. And I take this as crucial. And it is also perspectivist and interpretive. I think if we want to try to tell it like it is, that is unavoidable. Consider an example: what Bernie Sanders calls ‘socialism’ really isn’t socialism or like any other Marxian socialism. But it is the only kind of ‘socialism’ that realistically can be alive now in the United States or, for that matter, in Canada, New Zealand or Australia. But its obtainment would be a clear advance for such societies now. So I support it, hoping it would eventually morph into a genuine socialism. Actually, we have not yet even got that in any of these societies. But I think that it perhaps is on the roadmap. I think it is reasonable to hope so. And to struggle for it. But we should not close our eyes to the fact that things are moving to the right and this is no laughing matter. I would be deeply appreciative of what, for the time, a Sanders-like orientation could achieve in the United States and spread to the rest of North America. What Sanders calls ‘socialism’ really isn’t socialism but social democracy. It has served well ‘Scandinavian socialism’. Sanders himself, as he has said, what he calls and has advocated as socialism does not constitute a public ownership of the means of production. However, we must realize that even Marxist societies – once Yugoslavia for example – allowed very small-scale production privately owned. That may very well be a



good thing. Moreover, elsewhere there are cooperatives, convenience stores and cafes that are all non-state, non-publicly owned. They are usually small potatoes but not always and they do not tend to be exploitive. I am not saying that small is always beautiful, but it can sometimes be non-exploitive and better. Certainly, our little cafes in Quebec are much better than the big capitalist ones such as Starbuck's. These small-scale privately-owned cafes, for example, would probably remain superior to a state-owned morphed Starbuck's. Sometimes small is good. But beware of this on a grand scale. I go along with Yugoslavia here. It had intelligent and strict laws about how large a pop and mom operations could be, and how it could operate. But it was not against pop and mom, but against a pop and mom operation incorporated so that it spread all over the place like Kentucky Fried Chicken or MacDonald's.

There is a second, more problematic way that a genuine socialism, where the means of production are publicly owned, or at least the large-scale means of production are publicly owned, is problematic is in Scandinavian societies. We have progressive societies where there is extensive public ownership of the means of production, but there is also extensively, carefully regulated private ownership of the means of production. They are tamed like Sanders wanted big capitalism in the United States to be. Not Trump's utterly untamed bunch. Sweden is a wealthy country as are the other Scandinavian countries. They have an extensive private ownership of the means of production (Ikea, for example, in Sweden) as well as state ownership of the means of production. Their economy is a mixed economy, but the private corporations are extensively regulated as they would become in the United States if Sanders or someone like him was the President of the United States. And perhaps, very likely perhaps, in a Marxian socialist society.

Gorbachev dreamed of the Soviet Union becoming one giant Scandinavia. Of course, nothing like this will obtain with the glorious Trump. With all this mixture, Sweden is a very wealthy and progressive society. Its educational system and healthcare system put those of the USA, as well as – though to a lesser extent – British and Canada ones to shame. Perhaps this is a better way – this Swedish way – to organize society than with a full-scale socialist society? I remain a full-scale socialist. But Sweden's way is surely an open question. Sweden and Denmark are not Venezuela or Brazil, not even Switzerland, to say nothing of South Sudan or Yemen. And Sweden is not mucked up as is the United States. It is a polar opposite of Trumpland. I hope even the USA will back away from that. Dump Trump!

When we are seriously philosophizing, we must be drawing on some often different – sometimes very different – pre-philosophical convictions. That is inescapable if we would seriously philosophize. And, in the end, when push comes to shove, that is what we philosophers must rely on when we philosophize. It is something that our philosophical consciousness and convictions that, of course, may in fact differ among philosophers and, as a matter of fact, that cannot be avoided if we would seriously philosophize at all (MacIntyre 2009, 177). But Thomism ruling the roost would damper things down. There still would be some who would avoid sitting around the tribal campfire. Particularly that fire. To recognize this and to take it to heart is crucial and of deep significance for philosophers and for others who have a concern with philosophy. And who try to get a grip on its significance or lack of significance. However, even that needs some modification. It is clearly not so for all philosophers. I would add unfortunately. But it obtains for any philosophy which has at least a bit of significance or importance. It is so

for MacIntyre and for me. Though unfortunately, his particular pre-philosophical convictions are very contestable.

I am not trying to write a history of his thought. He has an enormous authorship. Beside his books, he has many shorter contributions of a varied sort. I hope that someone with a good understanding of Catholicism and Catholic thought including a good understanding of Thomism, that is not encumbered by either, will do such a critical history of his work. MacIntyre not only deserves that, but for a considerable number of philosophical concerns it should be done. For me, it was just my shock at his last two books that initiated writing about him. My response to my reaction on reading these last two books of him is: of how could he. I wanted to ascertain and to establish such a great mind with such an extensive understanding could actually turn to something utterly mistaken and with such little self-justification. But no matter even if I am plainly justified in rejecting his late thought. He still deserves the careful, detailed, critical work on his thought. We need for MacIntyre something the scope and ingenuity of Schneewind's book on Sidgwick. We can gain from such a study of MacIntyre, and MacIntyre deserves it. But I am not trying to do that. MacIntyre has an enormous collection including many shorter contributions of a diverse sort. I hope someone with a good Catholic and Thomist understanding but not encumbered by either will do it for MacIntyre on a considerable number of philosophical matters. This would be a critical element in our philosophical and intellectual history. It is vital that we have a substantive Thomist informed but a non-Thomist encumbered book on MacIntyre's writings. My task here is merely to analyze and critique his turn in his last writings to Thomism. My concern here that is, with MacIntyre's full throttle turn to Thomism and to a firm commitment to Catholicism in his last two books

The Tasks of Philosophy (2006) and God, Philosophy, Universities (2009). I was shocked by them. And I am trying to explain and justify my shock. And indeed, the grounds of why we should be shocked. Sadly, this is a place where he is going down the hill. Or so I believe.

However, before I continue on that, I want to say something more about where I am in accord with MacIntyre and where something importantly obtains. It is over his claim that philosophy, any philosophy, has pre-convictions that determine philosophic beliefs and orientations. Not just his or mine but anyone's. This is something that philosophers usually avoid, that Freudians attend to and a few philosophers know. Philosophers generally avoid it like the plague.

Recall MacIntyre's claim. A claim I am in agreement with that there is something other than philosophical analyses, arguments and elucidations or pure proclamations themselves that determine why particular philosophers take on one set of reasons and one position rather than another, with in all cases their particularities have a compelling force. It is so for many if not all philosophers that they are so directed. Perhaps unwittingly or unconsciously, they have certain pre-philosophical beliefs and convictions that predetermine their philosophical orientations that will be much a matter of where and when they live or have lived and how their inculturation has gone. There may be some common kernels they all or at least many may share as Andrew Levine wrote. But these common kernels turn out to be commonplace or banalities. It is their differences that centrally count.

I think, as I have emphasized, that MacIntyre is onto something of vital importance here concerning philosophy, but something that is often unnoticed or evaded by philosophers. But it is also the case that for some who see that it is so wish that it was not widely recognized to be so. Because they see that it is debilitating for philosophy universally. They are happy to see that most philosophers do not see that there are preconditions for philosophy. But not so MacIntyre, nor I. But he does not see that this also ropes in philosophy. Makes it ethnocentric. Particularly his perennial philosophy. It could only be perennial if everywhere there were the same preconditions or no necessary preconditions. But just 'pure reason theoretical and practical'. But there are neither. There are preconditions all right, but they are plainly not universal, except perhaps in some banal kernels. MacIntyre cannot have his perennial philosophy and his preconditions for philosophy.

Moreover, in my convictions in my cognitive life including my philosophical orientation and importantly my anti-philosophical philosophical orientation. However, there should not be a Marxist philosophy. Where Marxists take that road, they take us down the garden party. It is a social science and a critical social and political critique with a crucial cognitive domain. But it is not a philosophy. It affects my public moral orientation and my political critique. Something that I hope to be negatively and positively structured and to be determinately non-ideological.

But I have other pre-philosophical orientations and commitments as well. I am also a secularist, an atheist, a humanist, a feminist, an internationalist, that all agrees with Marxism. But I could abandon Marxism and still be all these things. Though I stick with Marxism and it aids all these other things. I am also a Quebec sovereigntist and just a

plain socialist. Patriotism is not a virtue or a vice for me, though it can be, and often is, a danger. Usually, it is a bore with too much shorting and claptrap. I was a kind of socialist early in my life, before I became a Marxian in my thirties and so early on, when I knew next to nothing about Marx. Later, I became a Marxist and still later, an analytical Marxist, close in orientation to G.A. Cohen. However, if sound arguments and evidence pushed me in a different way, I could drop my Marxism, though not readily or easily and even not without pain. And not turn to any form of anarchism or nihilism. While still remaining a socialist but of a Bernie Sanders social democratic sort. It was something like that, though not under that label, that was alive and well, though of course controversial, when socialism first took to me when I was an adolescent. I could turn to that again if that was all that was possible to reasonably get at that time or any time. But I remain, against the flow, a full-fledged socialist in Marx's sense. Tears come to my mind when I hear the Internationalist song. And I do not think I am a sentimental slop. But I am also now an enthusiastic Sanders supporter in the short political run. That is all that can be had in the North American situation as it stands now. And it would be a blessing, taking what actually obtains in the USA as well as Canada and Quebec, though in these places less grossly. But without contradiction, I remain a socialist who is committed to the public (state) ownership of the means of production, except for small pop-and-mom-like activities. I am glad that the café I go to is not Starbuck's but a small, privately-owned and run café. The coffee and atmosphere are much better there. However, I would reluctantly turn away from my Marxist socialism if a careful attention to evidence favored that turning away. What goes on in Swedish political speculation is worth noting. Perhaps the way to go in any event is with a Sanders-like democratic elected government control of the big

industries and the banks. The government would not own them, but it would control them. But I would not bunker down with Clinton to say nothing of Trump. That is unthinkable or at least should be. But Sanders is not like Hillary Clinton. She is a capitalist patsy. But she is not Trump. There are degrees of badness. It would be good to have a woman President and a woman Pope. But not Clinton or someone like Thatcher or like May. Though I remain a Marxian socialist favoring the public ownership of the means of production, though as the original Bolsheviks, e.g. Lenin and Trotsky, before 'war communism' during the struggle between the Reds and the Whites. And before Stalin's control when the public ownership of the means of production went with a thoroughly democratic government. Such a government by the ballot box could transfer socialism into capitalism as well as transfer capitalism into socialism. It could go either way by the democratic will of the people. Though where the people are reasonable and informed, at least in a Sandersonian way it would be socialist.

Though for the present in the USA, I would go if I were there without the slightest hesitation enthusiastically for Sanders or a Sanders-like leading the ship of State, a hegemonic ship of state for the present. Or at least something like it. I hope in the next presidential election something like that to be on the slate and be victorious. That it might obtain is thoroughly reasonable. But remember the climate disaster clock is ticking away. But now (2018) with the disaster and irrationality of Trump full in for messing things up not only in the United States but in some other world as well. Notoriously Palestine. We should relentlessly criticize him and seek his ousting. If we fail in that, perhaps it will be easier a little later for USA citizens to oust him even before the next US presidential election. Perhaps in a year or so.

What I have been saying does not at all argue against a long-term Marxist agenda. But Sanders' agenda is what the United States and similar countries can reasonably achieve. It is something Sanders very well could and would have done if he had gained the chance. It does not run against in a long-term agenda that could and would be a Marxist agenda. But the Sanders agenda is something possible and desirable presently in the United States. It is something like what FDR did for the United States when I was a child. It made things less miserable, though it wasn't a Shangri-La. It gave people half a loaf, not a full loaf. Trump, by contrast, will make things more miserable as well as more dangerous. And Hillary Clinton would at most have done a little bit to minimally alter the *status quo* and make things a little better. She is a Goldman-Sachs apostle.

When the effects of the tax bill will start coming in and perhaps then the uneducated and badly treated ardent supporters will come to understand how badly treated Trump is of them. That he hasn't any interest in them at all except as fodder for getting him votes when he needs them. They may come to see how he is making them even worse off than they already were. And perhaps it will even become more widely noted that he is a dangerous erratic and irresponsible man. An authoritarian buffoon and a fraud and a con-man which can plainly be seen in all ways as a disaster and not just bringing on climate catastrophe.

Supporting Sanders as I did and enthusiastically as I did was a short-term matter answering to a particular situation. It does not set aside my long-term Marxian orientations of going for the public ownership and control of the means of production. An intelligent and kindly people's control of their lives. But where that is not practically possible or even feasible, Sanders' 'socialism' will do for the occasion. But the Marxian way of public



ownership and control remains, and consistently, a long-term goal, at least for me and many here. It is one of my pre-philosophical beliefs and convictions that is a fundamental part of my Marxian social science and my life. Yet it, like a scientific belief, is not built in stone. It is falsifiable and could be falsified even in a more perfected Marxian social science. That does not mean it is falsified, but that it could be. It is for me both a scientific belief and a pre-philosophical belief and conviction. Again let me reiterate there is no Marxist philosophy, though some later-day Soviets thought so.

I have been mainly negative about MacIntyre in his late work. But in what I am to write now and have suggested above, there is a place, and a crucial and distinctive place where we are in accord and that is relevant here. I am a philosopher and a Marxian, though not a Marxian philosopher. I do not regard my Marxism, or indeed any proper Marxism as a philosophical viewpoint. But as a social science, and indeed as an important one which is concerned to explain our social order in an endeavour to help bring the presently determinate one into one that can and should obtain that will be a kindlier social order answering to human interests. My Marxism is taken to be not a philosophy but a social science which will achieve that. It is not one of my philosophical views, but it is one – and indeed a crucial one – of my pre-philosophical convictions and a constraining view which structures what my philosophical views can be. It remains for me also a part of a social science that also constrains my thought. It is not an ideological claim, and not merely a moral one and certainly not a metaphysical one or otherwise a philosophical dangle or just a moralistic claim. In saying this I am not stipulatively playing around with the word ‘philosophy’.

Besides what I have just claimed, a Marxist could also consistently be a pragmatist or a logical positivist or what Peirce called a critical commonsensist. Marx was none of these things, but a contemporary Marxist could be. But a Marxist could not be a Thomist or any kind of religious philosopher or a theologian, or even take a thoroughly Spinozistic metaphysical naturalist or Nietzschean traditional chopping down philosophy.

Marx and Engels tried to take leave of philosophy, but they failed (Daniel Bradney, Marx's Attempt to Leave Philosophy, Harvard University Press, 1998, Cambridge, Massachusetts). G.A. Cohen showed that and how Marx's historical materialism could and should avoid the swamp of dialectical or teleological thinking and of 'dialectical logic' in articulating historical materialism as an impressive account of social change (G.A. Cohen, Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense, Princeton University Press: Princeton, New Jersey, 1978. See also: Kai Nielsen, "On taking Historical Materialism Seriously", Dialogue, XXII (1983), 319-338). Cohen has shown that at least one crucial element of Marx's account is genuinely scientific and takes leave of philosophy. Cohen has shown, that is, that Marx's account of historical materialism is genuinely scientific and takes leave of philosophy and of teleology. It escapes metaphysical nonsense or obscurity. Marxism should be on the track of social science, which also is a practice that has a social economy agenda, and economic life. It should not be dialectical or Hegelian like teleological or in any way teleological. It should keep Marxism both as a social science with a historical understanding and with a revolutionary orientation. It is only the last element that is not scientific. But that does not mean that it is anti-scientific.

We should give a Marxian account which is social scientific and is fallibilistic, historicist, contextualist, interpretive, perspectivist, and with restricting its social scientific

claims to what can be confirmed or disconfirmed and be utterly without a metaphysical itch as a blemish. That is keeping its social science genuinely scientific.

My positivism and pragmatism are not to be construed as being only or distinctively philosophical, but as a deeply embedded, if you will, in pre-philosophical philosophically constraining of beliefs which are also commitments. With what George Santayana once called an 'animal faith'. Views that are just embedded in a reasonable thorough materialist or naturalist response to the world. It is, for Marxists, a part of their common-sense core beliefs. They should not be viewed as metaphysical beliefs or metaphysical in any way.

The positive matters I articulate are pre-philosophical convictions which constrain my negative beliefs about what the very philosophical enterprise can be without being philosophical itself or what can be genuine bit of philosophy. The latter which MacIntyre heavily relies upon. They also constrain what my negative beliefs concerning philosophy can be without themselves being negative philosophical beliefs. Our 'philosophical beliefs' negative or positive must be compatible with our pre-philosophical convictions and our other pre-philosophical views. For me, this means that my philosophical views, if any, must be compatible with such secular pre-philosophical convictions and beliefs. Any philosophical beliefs that I have must be compatible with these pre-philosophical convictions of mine. This means that I give no foundational role to philosophy. This means that many who take this role will also say goodbye to philosophy or at least only give it a very limited role. They might be called 'meta-philosophical views' of a purely negative stance. Something to help clean the Augean stable.

Perhaps this is why MacIntyre includes in his Tasks of Philosophy (2006) a Peircian-Popperian claim to be a necessary belief of the Tasks of Philosophy. But that is clearly incompatible with his allegedly philosophical belief in a non-anthropomorphic God. A matter that is, of course, crucial for Thomism. There is no positive mention of Peircian-Popperian falsificationism, except in Tasks of Philosophy. Such a Peircian-Popperian falsification view is plainly in conflict with Thomism. But it is rather likely that between 2006 and 2009 MacIntyre had come to recognize that either his Peircian-Popperian stance is in conflict with his Thomistic philosophical beliefs. He came to believe, I speculate, that he could not take his Peircian-Popperian stance and still be a Thomist. That would land him in a contradiction. He took it to almost a Thomist. It that a pre-philosophical belief?

I am not caught in a contradiction here. I do not take my Marxian beliefs to be philosophical ones, but as social scientific ones and perhaps with some additions of a moral sort that are not taken to be philosophical. Not all morality, or moral beliefs, is also moral philosophy or pure philosophy or a part thereof. My fallibilism, contextualism and at least in principle empirical testability or confirmability are philosophical beliefs or mine. I take an alleged unconfirmable allegedly factual belief to be incoherent. But that, if we are reasonable, we will not rely on them in trying to fix belief. This could be as well as a philosophical conception or pre-philosophical conception. And they are not a part of my Marxism. But they are compatible with it.

But a Marxian could take it that his Marxian beliefs, while being social scientific beliefs, are also pre-philosophical commitments that predetermine what his philosophical beliefs, if he has any, can be. But that does not commit him to having any philosophical

beliefs. My Marxism can, and I believe should, take leave of philosophy. There should be no Marxist philosophy but a Marxian social science and certain moral and non-moral commitments that go with its social science. They need have no philosophical backing.

Like the pragmatists and logical positivists, Marxists believe that these substantive social science beliefs must be, at least in principle, genuinely disconfirmable or confirmable. Without that there can be no justification. Perhaps even intelligibility. But independently or at least in principle confirmability/disconfirmability they cannot be social science beliefs.

We can and should have a bit of critical commonsensism in the justifying of our beliefs without seeking to make something 'synthetic *a priori*' or seeking in any other way to establish something philosophically. We should eschew philosophical foundations or some philosophical grounding which would yield 'the true way of life' or 'the reasonable way of life'. All that is another future of an illusion. Perhaps we should say already an illusion?

Yet a Marxist, like a pragmatist or logical positivist, should stay close to the ground by sticking with factual empirical beliefs that can be confirmed or infirmed. Or disconfirmed. He must not, like Trump, just 'create them out of thin air'. Whatever 'noise' makes him happy. Fuels him to go. He radiates 'false facts', that is pseudo-facts. What can at least be confirmed or informed is the path to justification, concerning what is the case.

We should also have a bit of what Peirce called ‘critical commonsensism’ in the fixing of our beliefs. We should not go on a Kantian way of seeking out ‘synthetic *a priori* beliefs’ or such any ‘philosophical foundations’ or any positive philosophical beliefs at all.

My philosophically pre-determinate life conditions and their resultant beliefs and commitments determining or at least conditioning any philosophical beliefs I may have or come to have. If my philosophical beliefs conflict with them and I realize this, I would abandon these philosophical beliefs or modify them until they are compatible with those life conditions beliefs and commitments or I would take leave of these philosophical beliefs that fail to align with these life orientations. Or I might take leave of philosophy period, except perhaps my Wittgensteinian-oriented anti-philosophy philosophical beliefs. I hold these beliefs in the expectation – perhaps ‘hope’ is a better word – that these pre-philosophical life conditions beliefs and commitments. Not that these beliefs or any philosophical will or even can ground them providing their ‘real foundation’, yield their real truth-values or their real sense and value. All of that is a fiction. Something which some philosophers call arm waving.

Leaving my Marxism in place goes perfectly well with the just mentioned views. I do not have an either/or here. The above Marxist beliefs and the other pre-philosophical beliefs just mentioned could be in place or in order together. Indeed, I take them to be. They are constraining for me for any philosophical orientation I may have without their being ‘foundation philosophical’ beliefs of mine themselves or for any others. My life orientation and commitments are a set of clarifications, particularly those with human import. I do not have an interest in playing little philosophical games for my intellectual amusement, though I do appreciate philosophical exercise where it is not all love’s labor

lost. My intellectual commitments go, as I have just mentioned, with my secularism, my humanism, my laicity, my feminism, my internationalism, my socialism on the road to communism in much the way Marx thought and practiced. These beliefs and commitments for me express the more fundamental beliefs that I have. They are something of both my head and heart. They are also a part of my pre-philosophical constraining conditions for any philosophical beliefs or commitments I may have or come to have. I would modify or reject if necessary any philosophical beliefs that I may have if they conflicted with them. I hold these above-mentioned philosophical beliefs contingently in the belief that these philosophical beliefs will clarify these more fundamental beliefs and commitments that I have. Philosophy for me, as it is for MacIntyre, is neither the first word nor the last word for me or for him. I could take leave of these philosophical beliefs or indeed, of any philosophical beliefs, and still hold, and not unreasonably, the above beliefs. They are pre-philosophical beliefs constraining any philosophical beliefs that I may have. This is where my spade is turned. These are where my firmest commitments are. MacIntyre and I are one here, though we have come to have very different commitments both philosophical and pre-philosophical. Very crucially, we have radically different and conflicting pre-philosophical constraining beliefs, as well as philosophical beliefs. I firmly believe mine are more reasonable though, of course, I may be mistaken. Is there space for non-question begging rational arguments here? I think so, but thinking doesn't make it so. Are we caught in a Nielsenan philosophical skepticism or nihilism? I have spent much of my life in trying to resolve this. Am I being just stubborn or blockheaded? That could be an occasion for there being a Nielsenan-like laughter and scorn here. That aside, for all philosophy except for the silliness of the sort I have just

discussed, a condition of the existence of pre-condition for any philosophical acting obtains. In that way, philosophy is not autonomous and cannot be. Here I stand with MacIntyre. Though we have different pre-philosophical pre-conditions as well as philosophical ones.

Philosophy is neither the first word nor the first deed for either of us. Though it is perhaps more determinate with him than with me. I agree with him that there is something other than philosophical analysis and argument or philosophy itself that determines what, if any, philosophical orientation that we philosophers will have or how we will orient our lives. These determiners will be our pre-philosophical convictions. We agree about that. We do not agree about what, in particular, these convictions are to be, but we agree that we philosophers will have some such convictions if we are serious about philosophy or about our lives and its tasks. We do not live just to buy around. Probably; whether they acknowledge it or not, it will be true of all philosophers. But it plainly is true of all if they are serious about what they are doing.

Still, both his and my pre-philosophical convictions that we take to be relevant in philosophy go in very different directions. We agree that we have determinate pre-philosophical pre-convictions. But it at least very much appears that even if these pre-philosophical beliefs and convictions cannot be justified yet they often still determine what our philosophical beliefs are and what we think and how we will act. This plainly troubles and worries me. But it doesn't in slightest make me come over to MacIntyre's philosophical side or to turn to nihilism or indifference. And it does not embed me in any philosophical dogma. I am neither a utopian nor a dystopian.



However, Kant or not, what MacIntyre says here about philosophy is crucial and on the mark. Yet even that needs some slight modification. What MacIntyre claims is so about philosophy having pre-philosophical convictions is not so about all philosophers and of their philosophizing. But it does obtain for philosophers with even a whisp of importance or seriousness.

MacIntyre rightly agrees even with Nietzsche that there is no philosophy within the limits of reason alone. That was tried by the dominant philosophers of the Enlightenment in the Nineteenth century, but they failed. MacIntyre also rightly says that outside observers of philosophy would generally conclude that philosophers had, governing their philosophy, pre-philosophical commitments and this is inescapable when doing philosophy is serious.

I turn now to some moral and political matters that do not depend on a philosophical orientation. The Bernie Sanders phenomenon has been a very good thing and also now the only thing empirically possible that is an emancipatory thing in such a society. Clearly better than with the elitist dominated Democratic Party, a Goldman-Sach's tainted Hillary Clinton as well as a Randian tainted Paul Ryan effectively running the Republican Party, with Trump as the official top person boisterously and sometimes threateningly tweeting away to his heart's content, while proclaiming irresponsibly. It is only the purely Republican inspired tax bill that has so far passed, as legislation to Trump's great pleasure and to an extensive human loss. But that is pure Paul Ryan-inspired. Leaving aside bellicose noises from Trump. Sometimes worrisome we get between the Republican and the Democratic parties much as a Tweedledum or Tweedledee situation. Still now with Trump and Ryan, people of the United States, though it drips all over the

place, get a both dangerous and repressive society, doing its best to achieve a repressive society trying to achieve a repressive, authoritarian, undemocratic, sexist society that would make most of its people's lives go worse. That is Trump's way to make America great again. Great indeed, for a few super wealthy oppressors running things authoritarily. Strong man style.

It is not only in the United States that capitalism is cruelly and crazily exploiting and undermining of much in the way of a social world of kindness. Britain, Poland, Hungary and Austria pitch in. In Germany, France, Italy, Holland and in all of Scandinavia we pave in varying degrees something of a caring kindness oriented social order. We should not look to Trump and his making American great again blabber to look for anything like that. We should instead look to the Scandinavian countries in spite of their few nay-sayers. An anti-immigrant party in Sweden got 15% of the vote. However, we need to be aware that a few of them may well come to make a trend. We must avoid becoming parti-pris. But we must not forget the United States and even the Trudeau government in Canada is forgetting about the harsh tide of climate change. No to parti-pris but yeah to hard-headed, determined, non-evasive gloves off examination and criticism. But we must not forget that the United States is bustling with climate deniers as well as climate evaders. We have seen increasingly, behind the scenes, support of them. The United States and South Korea are complicit in evasiveness where while all the time the climate change clock ticks away on the direction of disaster. Looking non-evasively at the world should not make us jump with joy as it did for many at the advent of the First World War. Some danced on the street, but not with the Second World War.

We should look to the Scandinavian countries, and to Holland and Germany as well, for some relief from the climate change side of the looming disaster. But more generally, we should look to Scandinavia for models. But these gentler winds may be too isolated and too small to have much of an effect. Still we must not stop struggling for a different kind of world, a better world! To gain anything, like it is necessary for there to be a radical engaging in climate change policy. But that is certainly necessary but not sufficient. We must not forget now, with the new Trump political environment, climate change awareness and action have been put in the closet with the door firmly shut. Of the wonderful rule of Trumpland. Still it is not just the US with Trump making the world worse again. Trying to fuel up its declining, using its global hegemony. Something that would enhance its badness. We are running out of time over climate. Given the horror of it, it is understandable that for many, they will be in a state of denial. Still that does not always obtain. A realistic understanding of what climate change presents us with an enhancement and for some of us the determination to fight back though increasingly so with a sense of desperation. With Trump and most of the Republican Party leadership sticking their heads in the sand, the task is even more difficult. More desperate. We need to realize that the very life of humanity is at stake. We must – urgently must – fight back with all our energy and all our intelligence. It is insanity not to do so. Our dear Trump will only make it harder. There is no room for evasiveness here. There must not be a Trumpland. No über alles Trumpland.

The United States is currently being corroded into an authoritarianism. Indeed, a moralistic propagandistic authoritarianism replete with lies, though there are fortunately, in opposition massive street rallies against Trump and his reign. And there is a sturdy,

often well-informed opposition. There is a struggle back against its creeping authoritarianism. It is encouraging, to say the least, though the danger remains near. This decay could have been avoided under a Sanders presidency. Instead, we would have had genuine human advance with a Sanders in the White House. We would have what Sanders called socialism, which was really a social democracy. FDR style, somewhat modernized. But even that, given the state of the world, would have been a very good thing. But back to MacIntyre.

Are MacIntyre and I like two dark ships (as they were for the combats in the Second World War) passing each other in the night? I fear so. But it is not quite so. Where we have something important in common is reasonably evident with, as MacIntyre puts it, the belief that something other than philosophical analysis, argument or elucidation fundamentally determines “why particular philosophers take one set of reasons rather than another to have compelling force. It seems that philosophy must be drawing on some set of convictions and that, in the end, predetermines philosophical consciousness” (MacIntyre 2009, 177). Here MacIntyre and I are in accord. Kant, contra both of us was mistaken when he claimed we could have religion within the limits of reason alone and even philosophy within the limits of reason alone. MacIntyre’s pre-philosophical commitments are, to put it mildly, heavily religious. Indeed, for the late MarxIntyre it was a firm Catholic attuned religiously. But any attuned religiously or paving a religious orientation at all was not in tune with any of his earlier books. Books that I read attunedly. From the first one published in 1953 and for several years on. They instead had a distinctive Marxist orientation. There we were fundamentally in accord.

What should we say of his three great books of his middle period: After Virtue (1981), Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition (1990) and Whose Justice? Which Rationality? (1991). He had there and very acutely a historicist approach but there were also some Catholic-like murmurs. (Perhaps they were stronger than that, particularly in the last two of the abovementioned books). A cynic might say that a creeping disease was sinking in. Though when I read those books, I did not give what may have been a creeping Catholicism or even a creeping religiosity much attention. Perhaps it is something I did not want to see? I expect that if I would re-read them, I would see that they were deeply affected by Catholicism? But how does that square, if at all, with his historicist sensibilities? I do not think it does. Or indeed could.

In his later life, Catholic religiosity was becoming philosophically overriding for him. There that distinctive Catholicism and a full-scale Thomist philosophical orientation came to obtain. With that a dogmatism set in. Or at least it became more clearly apparent than it was before. Or did he repress it before? Perhaps Thomists or Thomist whatevers would have noticed signs earlier? Signs that were apparent to them, but not to me. I was shocked by The Tasks of Philosophy (2006), by his embracement of full-scale Thomism hook line and sinker. Perhaps out of admiration for him and for his well architected application as historicism, I did not expect that MacIntyre would or could so turn to being so utterly and altogether uncritically Thomist. How could he, I said to myself. That indeed was a sea change for him. However, I want to turn again to where we are in accord. Where MacIntyre and I stand shoulder to shoulder and importantly so. It has to do with his claim, and my acceptance of this, that we have pre-philosophical convictions and

commitments that determine the orientations of our philosophy. And that this is true of anyone's orientation of philosophy if they are serious about philosophy.

It is me who adds the qualifier 'seriously'. I do not deny that there can be, and unfortunately not infrequently, philosophy that is just a matter of solving or trying to solve little conceptual puzzles completely lacking in any human importance: including some conceptual importance. For MacIntyre not to acknowledge that this can be a bit, indeed an unfortunate bit, of philosophy is a mistake. For this activity is indeed live and indeed common. I would not say well. Here we have philosophy that has no pre-philosophical pre-conditions or pre-commitments. It is just something some smart people do for fun as some people play chess. I do not deny that it is good intellectual exercise. It can also be good fun that tickles our intellect. But that does not gainsay its superficiality.

However, no serious philosophy can take this path. I am not, of course, against people having good clean fun or just an intellectual exercise. But it cannot be serious philosophy. That is not all that serious philosophy can be. It should not be what philosophy is now for many or what philosophy should become if and when it should morph into a Wittgenstein-style hero practicing an anti-philosophy philosophy. Wittgenstein himself would not have resisted here. If it turned into just the resolving of little conceptual puzzles, it would be a pseudo-Wittgensteinian, not a Wittgensteinian turn. Wittgenstein was deeply serious (See my On the Morphing of Philosophy, online).

However, when we are doing philosophy that might have even a whisp of importance, we will have to draw on some pre-philosophical convictions when we philosophize. When we so philosophize, we must rely on some such pre-philosophical

convictions that pre-determine our philosophical consciousness, or at least a central part of it. I am attuned with MacIntyre here and indeed, as I have said, agree with MacIntyre on this. In the end, when we philosophize or philosophically theorize concerning philosophy à la Wittgenstein, always we must rely on our pre-philosophical convictions. But where MacIntyre and I differ is on what pre-philosophical convictions and commitments we should have. I am firmly set against the crucial ones in the late MacIntyre. And no doubt vice versa for him. To put it shortly, his are firmly religious, theistically religious, pre-philosophical convictions and mine are firmly secular. I am for the Enlightenment and modernity, and he is not. That sets us fundamentally apart. Moreover on other matters, but still very crucial ones, we often differ. Neither of us would say that this makes our disagreement irrational or even non-rational. But what, if anything, are our pre-philosophical governing conceptions and commitments with their philosophical governing forces grounded on? Are they grounded at all? Or is that where grounding ends? Where over such matters does justification end or even start? Grounding or not? Remember Wittgenstein on justification. He says it must have an end or it wouldn't be justification. But how here? Is there a worry here? Is this why MacIntyre and I go in such radically different philosophical ways? Is this something that is actually non-rational? Or even irrational? Is this where nihilism enters? What should we say about this? And does it have a reasonable resolution of any kind? Or is it just surd?

But, Kant notwithstanding or not, what MacIntyre says about the unavoidability of pre-philosophical commitments for philosophers is crucially on the mark. But even that, as I here just argued, needs some slight modification. But a modification that cuts no ice. What MacIntyre claims is so about philosophers is not so about all philosophers and their

philosophizing. But it does obtain philosophers with even a whisp of importance or even of seriousness. Still, philosophy is often done in various ways both over time and at a given time and place including obviously historically.

MacIntyre has tried to escape from capture by the dominant philosophers of the Enlightenment in the Nineteenth Century. MacIntyre also rightly observes that outside observers of philosophy would generally conclude that philosophers were caught by such pre-philosophical commitments, which determine their philosophy. I assume he means intellectual outside observers. Kristal and the neo-Straussian but not Trump.

But accepting this bit about there being pre-philosophical commitments by all serious philosophers, I turn to his own late thoroughly and rigidly Catholic ones. Commitments and convictions that became more rigid in his Tasks of Philosophy and God, Philosophy, Universities. There, he just asserts his Catholic faith, namely centrally that God exists and that this is proven, that we have immortal souls, that there is a Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory. But none of these have been established to be true or even plausible. They neither answer to reason nor to human needs that we should recognize. This is not only true of Catholic theism, but Protestant theism as well and also of the theism of Judaism and Islam. There are no good reasons to believe in any of them. Indeed, by now, it has become clear that such beliefs are irrational or at least non-rational. Moreover, such beliefs are not necessary to make sense of our lives or for there to be a decent social order or for human flourishing. They were once so argued for, but MacIntyre just asserts them without argument. He just takes them without any proof of either their soundness or validity. He does not give us any reasons to accept his pre-philosophical convictions for his Catholic and Thomist philosophy. He just proclaims them.



For MacIntyre and I are, at least when we are doing philosophy or in approaching the subject, we are, as I said, like two dark ships passing in the night, as sometimes happened in World War II. I fear this is so. But it is not altogether. As we have seen, we have something important that is in common, namely, that we both believe that something other than philosophical elucidation, analysis, conceptualization and argument themselves determine why particular philosophers, including, of course, ourselves, take on one set of convictions rather than another when they philosophize. Particularly when serious matters are decisive. 'Pure Reason' does not rule the day when it comes to philosophy.

Are we, if we can be non-evasive and clear-sighted, limited to just choosing here? To what Sartre and Putnam both call an existential choice? I think there are matters of evidence, reasonability, that count in my favor here. Pre-philosophical convictions can be argued for without going philosophical at all, though people as different as Spinoza and Hume have given us sound reasons for not believing in God or immortality. But that is just frosting on the cake. In the Middle Ages, it would have been reasonable for MacIntyre to accept Aquinas-like beliefs in God, immortality and the natural law, but no longer. It was not, in long times past, unreasonable to believe the earth was roughly flat. But it is now for us utterly irrational unless we are very primitive people of very limited experience.

Are these pre-philosophical convictions and conceptions that Nietzsche often insightfully asserted and with evidence are what he referred to as the prejudices of philosophers? Either pre-philosophical, or philosophical, or both? Remember the first part of Beyond Good and Evil; and remember that in Beyond Good and Evil and in On the

Genealogy of Morals he proclaimed them to be a prelude to the philosophy of the future. Are we not in troubled waters here?

To recognize this and to take it to head and to heart as being crucial and of deep significance. I do not know if there can be a reasonable or even a rational settlement here. However, there is something I think we can settle.

## VI

I shall now turn away from MacIntyre and his full-scale and uncritical embracement of Thomism. Just in passing, note its conflict with what has been his well-practiced and at least reasonable historicism. But he can't have it both ways. For Thomism must reject historicism. It seems from his last two books that he has come to reject historicism. Thomism must reject historicism in any form. That robs MacIntyre of something that made his earlier middle period works so impressive.

I now (2017) instead turn for a while to politics in the USA, where Trump is making a full-throttle attempt to establish a Trumpland über-alles with its authoritarianism. The US ethos would not support or vote in a full-scale socialism, but it would have supported a social democracy à la Sanders in a modernized FDR style. Trump was more disturbed by him than by his opponent Hillary Clinton. Trump is not given to being even remotely perceptive, but there he was.

Sanders defended what he called 'political socialism' and hopefully will again in the next presidential election if he is a presidential candidate. I think that Sanders did the right thing in robustly supporting Clinton when Clinton and Trump were going at it for the presidency. Remember Trump's 'nasty woman' remarks as aside in one of their debates.

Indeed, she was a bad pill, but compared to Trump, she was an angel of mercy. That is, she was bad, but she wasn't even in Trump's class of badness. What Sanders advocated by contrast when he was in the election run was not what Marx, Lenin, Trotsky or Gramsci would have advocated or that I would like to be able to advocate, but it was all the traffic in the USA would bear in these circumstances. Sanders recognized that and properly acted on it. Policies like his may well in time lead to genuinely socialist policies and victories in the future. But that aside, it can now lead to genuine social democratic gains, as it did for FDR. It is not only that sometimes, the capitalists and those who stand against may have to be content with half a loaf of bread as Roosevelt observed, but for a time, the working class may as well. Perhaps to be pessimistic, it will always be that way. My dream for a classless society may be just a dream.

Even if I became convinced that Olof Palme was mistaken and that there is no capitalist road to socialism, I would remain convinced of the decency and moral respectability of Sweden's social democracy. So it would go for any genuine social democracy, but not for Blair's socialism, atheism and a moral orientation that would and does remain. Sweden, or indeed in any place in Scandinavia, is a better place to live than South Sudan, the Central African Republic, or even a much different and better place than in the United States. Especially that it has now an authoritarian buffoon in the White House. Even Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Australia or Britain are not something to cheer about, but fortunately, they are not as bad as the United States is now. But Israel, Hungary, Austria and Poland are competing with the United States for badness.

To again change gears, I have, for reasons that I have specified elsewhere, come to turn away from philosophy, take my leave of philosophy (see, for example, my Why

Philosophize? online). But I fear I have in fact taken only a part-time leave, as this manuscript demonstrates. Perhaps my anti-philosophical stances are philosophical attempts on my part to take an intellectual cognitive leave from philosophy? But whether I have or haven't, my political, social and moral beliefs remain intact. But they are not now determinately philosophical. Even if there are other determinate convictions that predominate, other than those of my Marxian ones that most fundamentally determine my turn away from philosophy. I am not at a human normative loss. I am not faced with nihilism, the tacking on of an ideology, or with skepticism. I am also not in for anything like Thomism or any other alleged perennial philosophy or 'First philosophy' at all. My secularism, laicity, humanistic moral stance, my social democracy, my feminism, my critical commonsensism, my belief that there is no escape from contingency or the need to get upset about the facts of contingency, all of these things remain intact. And reasonably should. If I hear or read someone taking, or trying to take, the 'high philosophical road' and remarking or stating that there are only sense-data, or that time is unreal, or that solipsism is so, or asking whether there is an external world or whether we can prove that this is so or that there are no values or how the universe began or what are its limits I would immediately detect bullshit, even if I knew no philosophy at all. Or even if I know some of philosophy, I would know that no philosophical argument and no philosophy that would dislodge me here from my rejection of such questions and the matters that go with them. No one would be able to convince me otherwise. That, if you will, is my animal faith. Does this result from my pre-philosophical convictions and commitments? Does this at all have the smell of arbitrariness? I don't think so. But thinking doesn't make something so, pace Descartes.

My secularism, laicity, humanistic moral stance, my social democracy fostered by a belief in socialism, remain intact. My commitments here stand in no need of philosophy, let alone of religion. But they do of a life of reflection and experience and reading. Some of which were and are, though decreasingly so, philosophical. But they are not philosophically grounded. There is no such grounding or any grounding. Moreover, there can be no philosophy that will convince me otherwise. But MacIntyre is in the same boat too. Do we not purely intellectually just stand in a fortuitous conflict? But he is the one who is carrying on extra baggage that is not needed. He has esoteric beliefs that I do not have. He is the one in need of proofs, not me.

I do not say or believe or imply that either MacIntyre's pre-philosophical convictions are bullshit or even that he is being like Mary Baker Eddy or Spengler. But I do believe that his pre-philosophical convictions, as well as his Thomistic philosophy, is at a great distance from reality. And that this has become obvious in his last two books.

However, I also have a Wittgensteinian worry. Like Wittgenstein, I believe that there is no private language or no Carnapian ideal language. I believe instead Wittgenstein's forms of language are the forms of life conception and his belief that we should therapize philosophy away is deeply on the mark. I think that there is a cognitive way to end philosophy. But if so, then so be it. (See Kai Nielsen, [Why Philosophize?](#) online).

These might seem to be, on my part, a playing of a philosophical language game. An anti-philosophical philosophy is still a philosophy. If we regarded, as I do, that the claims in the previous paragraph are so, have I not failed to take leave of philosophy? Is

there a philosophical way of justifying the claims of the previous paragraph? I do not know what to say about these matters. Should we take our most fundamental stances, our most fundamental commitments, as being a matter of animal faith?

I do not believe that it is rational or reasonable, or perhaps even intelligible to believe that God exists, that there is Being as such. Something which is not a being, or even the being of beings. And is the latter even something we understand? Is all of this plainly at least something we do not understand and that is very likely unintelligible? That clearly seems to be so. And is it something to bother our minds about?

But MacIntyre thinks it is something we do understand and that it is also so. But he has not shown that it is true or even reasonable. There is my claim and there is his. No matter how we go, when push comes to shove both on my part and on MacIntyre's part do we not end up with brute conflicting claims? It is a matter of what Santayana, at least on my part, finally is a matter of animal faith. But MacIntyre does not even have that. Something that on my naturalistic part looks to be something we just have. If Santayana's 'animal faith' is not the right word for this perhaps gut naturalistic conviction or perhaps animal instincts or animal inclinations or deep animal dispositions are better ways of putting these matters. But in any event, here justification has come to an end and indeed, genuine justificatory reasoning as well. But that naturalistic turn notwithstanding, I also, perhaps non-rationally or even more perhaps intentionally, it is better to have it so. It is, in some way, more reasonable to believe that the world and its creatures were not created by God, that indeed there is no God and that there is no immortality, and that, God or no God, there is no natural law. That it is a root element of morality that at any place or at any time where we can stop it or lessen it or at least not to condone it, unnecessary

suffering is to be avoided. We should do so for such suffering is morally intolerable. This is so whether there is a natural law or not. Whether we are cognitivists or non-cognitivists concerning morality. No philosophy, theology or science can gainsay it. That root element of morality goes beyond the need for moral rationalization.

However, isn't my Marxism itself a philosophical belief? No! It indeed is, I believe unfortunately, believed to be philosophical by some Marxists. But not for me, and not for many other Marxists. I am, for example, a historical materialist in G.A. Cohen's way, but I am not – and he was not – a dialectical materialist as was Georg Lukacs, his otherwise greatness notwithstanding, or even any blend of dialectical materialism at all. Nor am I believing in 'dialectical logic'. Such teleological views I regard to be bad metaphysics (to be pleonastic). I take Marxism to be a social science. Nor do I regard all moral beliefs to be ideological. 'Causing unnecessary suffering is evil' is not ideological. For me, Marxism properly understood, is an economic and historical social science. Yet I am wary of the term 'scientific Marxism'. It has itself been often used ideologically or allegedly scientifically ignorantly. Even if I abandoned my Marxism or came to believe that it did not achieve in becoming a social science, that Marx thought it could, and that there was not something properly called 'scientific socialism', my own socialism would remain intact. Even if I became convinced that Olof Palme had been mistaken and that there was no road from capitalism to socialism, I would bitterly accept this if this is where careful reasoning and examination took us. We should not tell stories to ourselves. But Palme did not claim this history in his 'buying' out road failed. That was an empirical matter that failed capitalism.

## VII

MacIntyre has left us with some good history, particularly in his last book (2009), but he has unfortunately relied on mere assertions where he has made philosophical claims. He has unfortunately just asserted that God exists and that we humans are immortal. In no place for him is there anything like such a rational establishment or even an attempt at it concerning such matters. He hasn't given even a whisper in the direction of a proof or argued for this and like claims. He has set out what is believed in theistic circles, even in cultured such circles. Particularly in educated Catholic Church circles. But he hasn't justified such beliefs or even at all tried to make them seem plausible. He has adeptly told us what Catholic belief is, and then simply asserted its truth. He hasn't given us the slightest reason for going along the Christian way or anything bearing a family resemblance to it.

We both are acutely concerned with ways of life and with the role of philosophy in it. I want to speak to that, though here it will be sans either religion or anti-religion. And my account will be very bleak. I think we human beings have made and are continuing to make a horrible mess of things and that now our very doings are leading us toward human extinction. And that here the global warming destruction clock is ticking away. The devil, of course, is human-made climate change with its glorious events of global warming with its hurricanes, floods, fires and so far barely bearable heat waves, aridity and the like. Former farmlands are no longer farmable. And sometimes with a terrible threat of temporary cooling as we are seeing now in places in North America. But global warming is the overall threat. Everywhere we are seeing extreme weather. Trump tweets on while California has its fire and mudslides disasters.



All of this was made by distinctive human activities that could have been avoided, but it was not. There still remains some chance of their being a reverse that will sustain human life, but far too little is being done. We are in a deep state of denial. However, time is running out. Prayer will not help. To say ‘Only God can save us now’ only comes to a senseless cry of despair.

The matter is made worse by the existence of the glorious Trump in the White House and his being as well the new ignorant, rapacious and arbitrary ruler of the present hegemonic world power taking pride in his signing damaging, erratic and often clowney executive orders and irresponsible tweeting away. Among the other both irrational and bad things he is doing, he is cutting out environmental protection orders. With this he is enhancing not only the United States’ destruction but the world’s. The United States, with its enormous military power and its mad man at the helm, is very destructive and very dangerous. It is too bad that the United States is not a small state, but it is instead a huge world power – presently the world power – headed up by an arrogant, badly educated authoritarian buffoon. It has been rumored that he has been angrily called a moron by his own Secretary of State. Our outlook, to put it mildly, is not good. Trump even thinks the claimed fact of human-made climate change is problematic. Indeed, he called it a hoax. Almost all climate scientists deny it. Trump will very perhaps ensure our human downfall by letting the fossil fuel industry run wild. He has made a good choice of Secretary of State to facilitate that. That will be Trump’s help to make America great again, while in reality it will have created a disaster. Coal mines existing in West Virginia, that will create jobs again where jobs are sorely needed. But other jobs. The expansion of environmentally safe energy would create more jobs and safety and possibly help keep

away our impending human destruction. But he opens up coastlines for offshore drilling. What a marvelous genius he is confident, as many paranoids are, in the mental soundness of his reasoning.

Trump belongs not in the White House, but some place where he will be kindly but firmly restrained and get psychiatric attention and care. Perhaps not in jail as some think. But he must be firmly restrained. Indeed, his power must be ended. To call him a monster is not an exaggeration. But names will not hurt unless followed by swift depowering action.

There are grounds for his impeachment and he should be impeached, and the movement is afoot. But perhaps it should not occur too soon, in spite of all environmental dangers, and ignorantly, and carelessly created things he is doing? And we must not forget his war threatening outbursts. Hopefully, these are just outbursts. Notoriously took to drink. He has yet a lot of support of the poor already badly treated that he claims to love. They ignorantly put him in governing business. But we must remember these very people feel, and rightly so, that they have been left out in the cold and indeed, increasingly so. If impeachment comes too soon, too many of them will feel he, their saviour, has been martyred and with their understandable rage, they are likely to make things even worse. But after a couple of years of Trumpism and his 'wonderful' tax bill, they will have time to see that he has made things even worse for them and then impeachment should begin. They will come to see that he is not a fake martyr or any kind of martyr. That he has never been someone who had their needs and interests in mind. That they continue to be left out by the very Trump who claims to love them. 'Saviorhood by Trump' will be seen no longer to con them into his ideological grip. It will be recognized fast behind the Trump steering wheel there is someone who doesn't give a damn about the poor or even the

middle class. If we can wait a bit for that understanding to sink in as is likely, it will even be the worst off Trumpism is likely to be ready for the garbage heap. But not to be recycled. He cons many of them along now, but it will become increasingly obvious that he cannot increasingly do so. They have an increasing grip about Trump. He has deceived them along the line.

Then will be the time to move toward his impeachment quickly.

But there is this difficulty with this stay on impeachment. It might be a mistaken – indeed tragically mistaken – to hold back on impeachment until the time is ripe then and now. The reason is that with all his crude and ignorant saber rattling it becomes clear that Trump is trigger happy. As his claimed and despised little rocket man contends, he, the leader in North Korea, has his finger on his nuclear button and so, also does Trump. There may be sufficient checks to block Trump from becoming a ‘Doctor Strangelove’. But still, this is very worrisome. So it is too bad that we may have to wait until his badness sinks into the understanding of his ill-educated supporters. Perhaps his draconian tax bill will push things along, but it is worrisome that it might not be quick enough. There are attractive pragmatic reasons for moving wither way. This is a terrible, fearsome situation.

But the climate disaster clock is ticking away. Is it ticking to human doom? We can wish that Trump and his sidekick Pence would just disappear. But that is just dreaming. There are here powerful forces working to make things as bad or possible or at least very bad. Whether that is their intention or not is irrelevant, for that is the effect of their actions. We can and should hope and try as hard as we can to assume that Trump will not if he is that mad make a reality of it.

For North Korea, its build up nuclear deterrence is only for their own defence from the United States. They remember well how under Truman they were flattened. If Truman had not reigned in MacArthur, it would even have been worse. They would have been nuked.

The situation is terrible, and its terribleness is not adequately noted. I guess, if I were the praying sort I would pray that there are sufficient checks on our dear Trump so that he will not be able to Dr. Strangelove us. But with his unreasonable that he will do horrible things to the world along with all the blabbering that he will make things all so nice. It is too bad that he is not just a buffoon. When his popularity wanes, as it seems to be, we should as quickly as possible impeach him. This can be done in a thoroughly democratic way. He should then be put away in some mental institution where he can, without unkindliness, munch away on his hamburgers.

Trump will however be expected to put up resistance to his impeachment. He would stay in power by a coup on his part if he could and, if it is all he can do, call his impeachment a coup. He has no respect for democracy. He is not only, as Mitt Romney has alleged, a fraud and a conman, but it should be added an uncaring authoritarian, dictatorial and sexist megalomaniac. He may be the idiot that his Secretary of State has allegedly in exasperation called him, but unfortunately, he is a dangerous idiot with a will to power. He must be unpowered as quickly as possible.

There are good grounds for his impeachment and he clearly should be impeached. The movement for it is already in order. But for good pragmatic reasons, it should perhaps not occur too soon, even in the face of the environmental danger and even the more

immediate fear of his finger being so near to the nuclear weapon button. I hope there is someone watching him day and night who can and will stop him if he gets wild. It is very fearsome that such a person as Trump has such power.

We should understand that the ill-educated relatively poor people need a little more time in order to recognize that Trump is not a custodian of their interests, but someone who will make them even worse off than they already are. But when the majority of them are so aware, we should move radically to impeachment. Still, we are indeed now in between a rock and a hard place. But it is necessary, though unfortunate, that a lesson must be learned by the poor left aside ill-educated people that fanatically support Trump. His obedient foot soldiers so to speak. If impeachment is carried without their shift in allegiance, without their coming to see that he is making things even worse for them, then impeachment will bring them the feeling that the elites have destroyed him before he could deliver the change they supported him for. And our troubles will continue. We indeed live in ghastly times, but they will feel that his opponents have beaten down their hope for a better life. Until they come to see it is Trump that made their hopes for a better life an illusion, that he had no intention of making things better. He rather sought and succeeded with his tax legislation making them even less well off. In time, they will come to see that Trumpism has only made things worse for them. They will come to see that he doesn't give a damn about them. He is instead in for making America in some plain ways greater for billionaires and millionaires, while the poor, the middle class, the lower middle class and just the working class and the underclass all get worse off. These poor and near poor have been getting worse off for a long time. Under Trump's reign, they will be worse off still. He has bitten the hand of the poor and middling poor who certainly, but

foolishly, supported him. Will they be fooled into thinking that their worsened situation is not largely due to their dear Trump?

We indeed live in ghastly hard times. As much as I am sympathetic and in accord with Noam Chomsky, I do not share his optimism about the future. But I do share his determination to fight on, even though I think if I were merely a neutral observer and predictor of the future, I would predict we will all horribly go down the drain in a few years. Perhaps forty of fifty years on, or maybe even sooner. But this only enhances my determination to fight on resolutely and as intelligently as I can. Perhaps it is a fight out of desperation? At ninety, I can only use my pen and my voice. We must not fall into a state of denial or become global dystopians or any kind of dystopians. Though not a few of us are doing so. We should not give up though we recognize circumstances are very grim and tilted either or both against us. Again, I fear that not a few of us, even though we do not fall into a state of denial, will consider that it is hopeless. It is as if it were noted that a huge meteor was about to strike our earth right at the place where we live. And there was no time to move safely away. We are just doomed to utter destruction. That is for us not so sure and we can and must fight against it. Though we must not fool ourselves concerning its grimness. It is bloody grim. And the chances are against us.

In all of this it should be noted, though not without anxiety, that the Right in Europe and in North America and South America is gaining grounds. That in part has been caused by the blessing of neoliberals. A good part of this has been caused by the blessing of the ruling class of committed capitalists to neoliberalism.

## VII

To shift focus. I have been very critical on religion in discussing MacIntyre's full stop Thomism. And with his uncritical embrace of Catholicism. The emphasis of my critical examination in this book of religion has been on Christianity, and most particularly of Roman Catholic Christianity. But the critical core of that criticism would apply as well to Protestantism, and also to Judaism and to Islam. But the popular tirades in the West are now going to Islam in the form of an informed Islamophobia. However, I believe Islam is another matter. MacIntyre here is not so infected. Nor is the Catholic Church. It clearly must be understood and be firmly taken to heart that Islamophobia is not to be tolerated. It is to be condemned wherever it is voiced. Moreover, it should be clearly understood that Trump is ignorantly anti-Islamic in spite of his affection for the leaders of Saudi Arabia. It is their politics he attends to.

Anti-Islamism is very common in both North America and South America as well as in Europe, as anti-Semitism used to be. Both are nauseating and categorically to be rejected. But we must neither confuse being firmly against the present Israel government with being anti-Semitic. Nor is detesting the Saudi Arabian regime to be confused with being anti-Islamic. We have here very different matters.

However, MacIntyre here has not been so infected. Nor is now the Roman Catholic Church or any other Catholic Church. It must be clearly understood and taken firmly correctively to heart as well as to head that Islamophobia is not to be tolerated. Moreover, it should be well understood and condemned. Trump with his Islamophobia is grossly ignorant concerning Islam. Yet he falsely fires up the Anti-Islamism that is now very

common in both North America and South America and is common in Europe. With Trump his Islamophobia fits badly with his affection for the leaders of Saudi Arabia. But in the regions I have mentioned as contain anti-Islamic elements were in earlier times anti-Semitism. Both are utter illusions and dangerous illusions. Firmly be rejected. It is to hope with better education they will thoroughly disappear.

I claim and have argued, but not MacIntyre, that all religions are groundless. But we can believe in the firm grounding of Pope Francis does and also be for a world of kindness and understanding that is to be obtained throughout the world. I don't believe any religion at all has a ground, but like Pope Francis I am committed full stop to an all humanly wide kindness, respect and caring, though our understanding may often fail to be cross-cultured.

Generally, there should be no impeding of religion. But vice versa with religion that should toward secularism as well. But historically both have been violated. Violated all too often. Tolerance is often in short supply. Where a religious orientation murders doctors who give abortions or burn down or otherwise shuts down abortion clinics I would be for impeding them. But generally not. There should be neither though I hope religion will wither away. And throughout much of my life I have provided arguments to sustain that religion rests on a mistake and that it is desirable that we be Atheists. But forcibly shutting it down is another matter, even if it could be carried out successfully.

Moreover, religious believers should be respected. But the reverse should obtain as well. I think Pope Francis and MacIntyre would be with me here, to go anthropologically and sociologically. In places in the developed world religion is withering away. This goes



with increased wealth and human security, and with more extensive education. We can see this spectacularly throughout Scandinavia and even in effect so to an extent in Quebec and Italy and even a little bit in Ireland. These places were firmly bastions of solid Roman Catholic belief. Remember how priests in Gaspésie have to go from village to village to say mass so as to cover all the place where mass is to be said. I depart from Pope Francis and MacIntyre here, but that is not to impede religion but to be grateful for its peaceful withering away. People do not need religion to make sense of their lives.

To turn to a different matter. I stand firmly against Islamophobia, as do many Jewish and Christian believers. It isn't at all just a secularist humanist matter. But what is an utterly different thing is that I believe that Islamic religions are groundless. But I believe as I have argued through much of my life that concerning all religious beliefs. Jewish and Christians beliefs are no more in any way in better standing than Islamic beliefs. All three of them have their more primitive forms and sophisticated forms. Some of all three of them have primitive forms which are ghastly. The difference between Judaism, Christianity and Islam are merely cultural artifacts. The whole religious business, with theistic religions and non-theistic religions, is groundless. But this must not turn us into being even in a mildest way disrespectful of Jews, Christians or Moslems, though we can hope and peacefully and fairly argue for the desirability of these religions' disappearance as well as for their replacement by a secular humanist orientation, but never by a forceful massacre of any kind. Those of us with an argumentatively secular humanist orientation or any other kind of secular orientation including a Nietzschean one or Marxist one have a higher sense of superiority. Though we can and in many places think and argue for one orientation being better than another, while remaining tolerant all the way down of

religious orientations. This should not entail any sense of a superior orientation. This may be hard, but it is necessary.

Again a turning. We need to recognize that some places and at some times are better than others. They go better than others. Compare August Strindberg's Sweden with contemporary Sweden. Compare Denmark of 1900 with Denmark today (2018). But we also and more crucially must clearly take note of the way that people are brutalized widely in the world or often just left out to immiseration. Children in Yemen are starving to death hourly or dying of cholera because of the war. The dying is massive there. And a worldly hell more generally and more deceptively is around the corner for us all. There is no escape anywhere to a gated village. I speak here of the global warming eminent disaster. The thing Trump claims to be a hoax. It is around the corner, but most people are in a state of denial here. But global warming disaster is already showing its dreadful effects. But more and more various disasters come to be while our "great world leader" tweets irresponsibly away and plays golf, takes the United States off the Paris Accord and proclaims that global warming is a hoax. That is utterly irresponsible.

In the way I have been just characterizing matters, I show in effect that I am for a passionate politics. Mark Lilla firmly believes that is something we should avoid. There is a reasonable force in his accounts. But they do not touch what I argue and defend here. I only want and advocate a passionate politics that is in accordance with rationality and reasonability. Passion and reasonability indeed often conflict, but they do not always conflict, and they need not conflict. Passion that is reasonable but all passions to be reasonable need not be grounded in reason but only in accordance with reason. That is

true for values as well. That is why I am a non-cognitivist. Passion and reasonability indeed often conflict. But they need not always do so.

Such an account as I am giving is intended also to be in accord with human caring, kindness and a concern to make sense of our lives. It can be and often is both passionate and reasonable and something that I would continue to believe in a last hour. It can and should be both passionate and reasonable.

Such politics need not rush in or stumble into ideology or lead us down the garden path. We can be passionate human beings about politics and reasonable about them as well. This may sometimes be difficult, but it can and indeed should be obtained.

We must not become alienated from empirical facts, even if all facts are interpretive facts or firm conceptual sophistication. We must not ignore such crucial matters. Including, of course, crucial facts. We can and should, while remaining careful about it, be in accordance with what it is reasonable to be believed and to be done, though something may be reasonable to believe but something in conflict with it may be even more reasonable to believe.

Passions can indeed be dangerous and deluding. When I noted on our interest pictures of US border guards going just outside the USA border fence into Mexico and emptying bottles of water placed there for thirst-stricken, exhausted refugees attempting to enter the United States, I was angered at seeing it. It is one thing to arrest would-be refugees and take them into custody, that may well be justified, but to deprive them of water when they are so thirsty is clearly vile. Yet US border guards do it. An order? I suppose so. Either way it is vile.

To be angered by this is clearly in order. Anger against people doing that. People who would do that are doing something that is humane. A cynic remembering the Nazi concentration camps might grip that it is indeed "alas all too human".

Is my reaction here not about what is both passionate and reasonable? To be passionate about it is clearly not unreasonable. It clearly is both reasonable and emotive. And justifiably so. We are not caught, let alone trapped, in ideological illusions here. Or, if you will, just in ideology period. We should, however, keep in mind that there is danger here. There are places where our emotions can waylay us. But, or so I believe, that is not so here.

There are occasions where there is a deep need for passion in practice as there sometimes is elsewhere. There are passions which are compatible with reasonability. And such as I have discussed is a passionate reaction. Contra Nietzsche it need not and should not weaken the passionate. And such passionate people need not be reading or reasoning as a loser. As is the case here. Such passion does not diminish us either morally or intellectually. And in this way, we should be passionate about politics. All politics does not answer to rationality. But some of it does. And sometimes crucially.

It is also well justified and reasonable to be passionate about the following situation. Even in our countries. In Quebec, the country I live in, there are many people isolated and lonely. Some wandering about aimlessly on our streets. Some are homeless. Some roughing it out sleeping on the streets. There are indeed both many women and men isolated and lonely and estranged in our world. And not just the poor, but spectacularly there are people who are isolated and lonely and estranged in our world.

Feeling in various ways that they are left out and passed over or that things have gone badly wrong for them. Where they are uneducated or sparsely educated in the United States, they are also very likely to be Trump supporters. Such matters are often causes of religious commitments, but they often are a cause of atheism as well or just of indifference to religion without any secular commitments. Here I want to comment on these matters.

There are plainly too many alienated and estranged people in the world, both in developed societies with a largely secular and laicity orientation as well as in societies of a predominantly or even a mainly religious orientation. The latter are increasing in non-developed countries.

## VIII

Again a turning. I have criticized Alasdair MacIntyre and his Thomistic turn, and in doing so, in effect I have defended my secularism and atheism and rejected once again at least all theistic religious orientations and any other religious orientations, though some seem somewhat more cognitive answerable than others. Theravada Buddhism rather than Christianity, for example. I have done this about their various cognitive attunements to the cosmos and about their social and political attunements to the world. But I have said next to nothing about individual alienation and estrangement of our lives. The ways our lives are often entangled in ways that may make one partner bitterly and sadly say to the other partner there is nothing between us. That realization or misrealization between partners, illusion or not, may drive one or both of them, in desperation to religion or to atheism or to nihilism. Or even to global dystopianism or at least to dystopianism. It may

make them feel alone in the world. And feel deeply estranged and alienated. There are not only a few such people in our world, so alienated. There are many people so isolated and lonely, some wandering about aimlessly on our streets. Some even homeless, roughing it out. There are indeed both many women and men, and not just the poor, who are isolated and lonely and estranged in our world. Feeling that they have been left out and passed over and that things have gone badly wrong for them. Where they are uneducated and in the United States, they are also very likely to be Trump supporters. But there are also many radically different alienated, including many of the well-educated who would merely snort at the very idea of Trump. Such matters are often the causes of religious commitments, but often they are the cause of atheism as well, or just indifference to religion. Here, I want to briefly comment on this.

There are plainly too many alienated and estranged people in the world, both in developed societies with a secular and laicity orientation, as well as in societies of a predominantly or even mainly religious orientation. The later are increasing in underdeveloped countries or countries.

## IX

We need to take a non-evasive look at the United States. For my purpose here particularly from 2015-2018. That 'great country' is by far the country that has the greatest military buildup in the whole world. Something that is very expensive, while poverty and environmental damage reigns in the United States. And it has the distinction of being the only developed country without a single payed healthcare system. And take note of the pipeline built across the Missouri River, a river flowing into the Mississippi River, the

USA's equivalent of the Nile River, cutting across the middle of the United States and flowing into the Caribbean Ocean. A spill in that pipeline would be disastrous to most of the United States. And for a contrast, take note of the sanctuary cities in the United States to protect people from Trump's vicious onslaught to arbitrarily and needlessly deport people from the United States. Something he takes in his usual irrational way to his 'Make America great again'. Actually it would make people, and not only the deported, worse off and weaken the country. With an aging population of people who need care, the United States needs his labour. Merkel most perceptively saw this for Germany. But Trump lacks the insight. Trump's move will not make America great again. It will make it worse. Actually it would make the vast majority of the population worse off and not only make the deported worse off and weaken the country. His tax bill, the only thing he has got passed yet, will fill the pockets of Billionaires and Millionaires and perhaps the pockets of the upper middle class, but will have the effect of further impoverishing the great number of people in that country. It will, that is, make things much worse. Moreover, these people there are the Dreamers, the decree recipients created under the Obama reign were young people living in the United States, not born in the United States. People who had lived most of their lives in the United States. Have been educated in the United States. They are usually as American as apple pie. The Trump draconian policies will not only harm them but weaken the United States. The United States will lose a lot of capable, loyal, educated workers.

Looking at this and a myriad of other things, it will be noted that things are getting very bad there. The United States is, for example, getting 'clean coal' and it cracks until it cracks. New Zealand is not the United States. Quebec is not Hungary. Iceland is not Australia. We do not have Shangri-La in any of these countries. But there are differences,

though they may in short order change. In the above three sentences mention in lack of them it is rather plainly now (2018) better to be in the first-named country than the second, though nowhere is it heaven on earth. And things in short order may change.

Things generally go better in Europe than in North America. Though I wouldn't trade off Canada for Austria. Or even now with Trump I wouldn't trade off the United States for Romania. There are all kinds of historical contingencies here. Still, we can safely say some things. For example, that now what I said in the first sentences of this paragraph, e.g. 'things generally go better in Europe than in North America'. And even there I am referring to the last years of the past century, thing there particularly of the ascension of Trump. It is the United States and not even Poland pulling out of the Paris Accord, and generally about the environment. Or even about the environment even in Canada does not compare favorably over Denmark.

About the environment much more and urgently must be done. It may take a long time before North America becomes like Scandinavia, but in terms of urgency that I say rather reluctantly can wait. But the climate change cannot.

Thinking about the climate matter can and for some it causes despair. We must not despair. We must not give up or wait until it is clearly too late. We must not become Global Dystopians or any kind of Dystopians. (See Junat Diaz editor Global Dystopias, the Boston Review 2017). But we need to be keenly aware of our dangers and among them the world's horror and not retreat into a suicidal denial. I hope I do not this engender and denial when comes to a suicidal blackout. It is hard to fight off. Though safe bets are



against us. It is indeed hard to fight off. But it must be done. (If that is pure moralism then so be it).

## X

When I think of the world, I think also of what is going on in South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Burma, Ethiopia, Syria, Afghanistan and above all in Yemen. The world boils over with dreadful destructive and brutalizing actions. There is also the despair engendering global warming disaster. It is less spectacular, but it is worst in its long-term harm producing. It is our planet universal and will remain for ages after us human beings prematurely disappear because of our inaction concerning it. And it may end human life. Rather than the much, much more distant cooling of the sun.

But again, I say, we must not give up. Though of the harms and potential harms that I have been mentioning of global warming disaster aside, the others are not globally universal and more readily resolved. Though they are persistent for us now. We have seen that some nations and cultures resolve things better than others. Norway is not Saudi Arabia. Holland is not Mexico.

Mitt Romney former Republican Presidential Candidate who gave Obama a close run remarked concerning Trump that he was a fraud and a con-man. Perhaps he is not a fraud and a con-man but just an idiot as it is alleged one of his closest aids has in exasperation called in. I don't know but it may be some kind of a toxic mixture of both. Sometimes Trump seems cunning like a fox. Other times an idiot engaging in his self-destruction. In any event, he is a terrible danger and the end of his rule is dearly needed. A Pence replacement of an ailing Trump will not do. A reactionary evangelical. Compared

to a megalomaniac sexist monster, Pence is sure small potatoes. But such a reactionary President. Small potatoes also do a lot of harm. Making America great by Trump's understanding is to make it the world's most effectively exploitive nation where the poor and the lower middle class will be even poorer and in other ways more disadvantaged than they are now. They will also be more effectively controlled and more thoroughly muddled by Trump's and the Trump administration's 'fake negos' and false claims it treats people to. Again more than they have now. It will be Fox News perfected. Ideology will rule the day. Indeed, we will have a brave new world. I don't know if Trump has the sense to understand what he is doing. But I would guess he has some of it. But I expect it is what he wants, without the likely backlash. And I hope his loyal followers rallying by him though for the most part ruthlessly passed over by him will finally realize what he is really doing. I long for a social environment of kindness. But what we actually get is a world of extensive ill treatment of people with not infrequent treatment episodes of brutishness. For example, in Libya slavery and not just wage slavery has returned. Refugees are up again for sale. In London, England some of their car washing businesses have slaves. We have a widespread negation of human respect with nothing that even resembles remotely of kindness or even decency. There are, of course, individual acts of kindness. I frequently experience it as I wander in Montreal with my walker. But that is not generally the case. Instead, we have a largely and ugly sometimes brutal uncaring world unconsciously out for self-destruction. In certain respects led by the big boss of the world's most powerful superpower. Its leader, a dreadful boss, aims on what he calls 'making America great again'. By which he at least in effect means making the superrich and the mildly rich even wealthier and the working class and the underclass unable to find and

still worse off than they are now. In effect letting them increasingly to scramble for crumbs. It is difficult not to be pessimistic. Indeed, not to despair. And even if everything shifted to being fine for the working people and the underclass, there still is climate warming issues threatening our very existence.

I do not want to take now a pessimistic view. I do not despair of my personal life. It is the state of our world which tends to engender despair. For the most part, my life has gone well. I have made some mistakes, but then most of us do. I realize that I have been a lucky one. But life itself for vast numbers of people and increasingly so is largely a horror. But that does not make me react or think like a loser. But we are even in our world many kilometers away from having a world even of decency, let alone of kindness for masses of people in our world. Things are going very badly for them and increasingly so.

Like many others I very much want the world of human caring and of kindness where all human beings count and count equally at least in current respect. But we are at great distance from there. Instead, in many places great masses of people are just trying to hang on to life. Think now (2018) of South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, the Rohingya of Burma. While in most undeveloped societies things are not quite that bad, they are still very bad. But in very different ways this is so in developed societies too. There is there frequently an extensive feeling of meaninglessness in their lives for many people. We saw this characterized in the films of Ingmar Bergman. Even where people are secure economically, there can be and sometimes is a sense of meaninglessness in their lives. Things go badly for people though not in the obvious brutish way that life goes on for people in the underdeveloped societies I have just mentioned. But things go badly for

people all the same, though in less obvious and less brutal ways. I mentioned Bergman's films with its distinctive thinking. Thinking of Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s.

Even in now-developed societies of reasonable material plenitude, for many there are numerous people, women and men, and among them old people or people by the door of being old who are so affected. They often live in isolation and loneliness, with little sense of meaning in their lives or of their lives. More so, perhaps, in large cities than in villages. But in villages too. Something that was perhaps less so in earlier times than now. Is there any resolution or amendment of this with social changes? Is there any way of keeping it from spreading and enlarging? Life, in this respect, is perhaps worse now in some developed societies than it was a hundred years ago. Or at least in 1950s-1970s than now. It is also likely that there is more badness of this sort to come. Moreover, more generally, with Trumpism in the USA and the rise of the Right in Europe, things are getting degraded. Would a renewal of religion or populism or of both be the order of the day? Or will this actually make things even worse? Is this, even as our world is turning, just something that is a part of how the human condition is? Is this the part of the world we are coming to have? Is it with its horror unavoidable? It is harder now to feel at home in the world. Is there no respite from this? Is this just the world we are coming to have?

## XI

Christians have been and some still are notoriously anti-Semitic and sometimes anti-Black. Some Jews are anti-Moslems and in Israel there is unhappiness with their Black population claiming to have Judaic roots. Racism is as common in both places as blackberries in North Carolina. Religion often breeds prejudices which aid in making our

world horrible. But clearly not always. Think of the Quakers. But both Judaism and Christianity historically are generally not good on tolerance and so is the Islamic religion for that matter. Again, Pope Francis runs clearly against the history of Catholicism for that matter. But that is true of Calvinism as well, on the Protestant side. Religion has generally not been big on tolerance or universal human respect, except sometimes ideologically.

We citizens of both the underdeveloped and developed worlds live in a horrible mess. Sometimes in the same way, namely with global warming disaster and extensively in developed countries a rich dominating and exploiting capitalist class government rules the poor and, in many ways, difficult for the masses. But almost always messes up socially for the poor. Still Sweden is not South Sudan or Yemen or differently Saudi Arabia or the United States. There are few places we can now evasively favorably write home about. We live in a terrible world and not in as the famous popular song tells us in a wonderful world. There are few places where patriotism is a virtue.

Religion does not reliably help us out here. Gandhi was in important ways a liberator, but he had little concern over the faith of the Blacks when he lived in South Africa. Some Hindus have been untouchables and in general they have their caste system. There should be no caste system or higher or lower classes. And there should be no chosen people. Various religions and non-religions will and indeed should sometimes and in some respects criticize each other. But as a result of doing so, they must not try to close anyone down where they have that respect. Or in any way of doing a discriminating against those whom we criticize? Criticism must not lead to discrimination. There they are not in harming with each other, just because there would be no discrimination in between them or even against them, there is no harming as distinct

from criticizing different beliefs or different life structures. But where they themselves harm others, they should be stopped but if they continue in they way then they themselves should be shut down.

Another turning. Between nations and between cultures, hate is not infrequently the normal state of affairs. Think of the relations in Burma between the Buddhists and the Rohingya Moslems. Think of the American soldiers fighting in the Vietnam war and the Vietnamese. Look at Yemen, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Syria. One has to fight off despair. For Westerners, members of the developed nations, there is a homegrown mess. In these countries, first predominantly and across the board Anti-Semitism. Now it is Anti-Islamism. Often Islamophobia. I also think that a new Anti-Semitism is arising. It is linked with Israel in its present. Now (2018), it is an ugly state and should be opposed. But Jews should not be opposed even when they are citizens of Israel. One could be against Israel as we should be and certainly not be against Jews. That is the way things should go.

And along with this, these endless vicious wars going on in Afghanistan and Syria. And Saudi Arabia behaving brutally at home and in Yemen as well. They are messing with Qatar and Iran. And there is then allay and arms in the United States with our dear Trump supporting them. To add to this, the United States pushed along by Trump are threatening secularity. Things are getting steeply dangerous. Trump is a kind of Dr. Strangelove. We need practices which will be used to enhance human relationships. This is how we different human animals should think about each other and treat each other. Nietzscheans may think that makes me softy. If that is so, then I am proud of being a softy. Long live the softies! In the ways we think about each other we should respect as

much as possible our common humanity and our vulnerability. We should take to head and to heart our common vulnerability as well as what may be our overreach here. With some of us, this will be enhanced or encumbered by our particular enculturation. This must be recognized and acknowledged and not be the cause for contempt of others. If you want to say this is a religious attitude on my part, so be it. But it does not justify it. Does not show it to be inferior or superior.

There are no, as far as treatment goes, superior people. A chosen people. Nietzsche was dead wrong here. There are no übermenschen. There is probably no overall superior grasp of reality. Kripke was very bright philosophically, but he was very useless with us, a bright of academia trying as he did to figure out the best way of opposing the Vietnam war. Trying his best to be of help in our group, he just messed things up. I have also been in places where I was just a nuisance. The best way to help is just to get out of the way. But that was not always the case. There is no such things as overall superiority or overall abilities.

However, even if there were it should not be used to be contemptuous of some people, to put them down or to ridicule them. Superior distinct capacities where they obtain do not point to a general superiority.

One might be a mathematical genius and inadequate in political analysis. Kripke brilliant in his own philosophical domain was naïve about political matters. There is little if any overall shining or brilliance. One can luck out in one respect and be ignorantly childlike in another. A sophistication concerning modal logic does not help one to be adept with political analysis. And vice versa. There is substantively universal superiority. There

are a few diversely talented people. Paul Robeson and Noam Chomsky for example. But they are rare. And even they do not have quite overall superiority. And we are generally far from it. We should go when looking out for this matter remind ourselves that these by accident of a particular enculturation or some kind of being go better or worse. Diversity abounds.

I lucked out, really much, in my enculturation. A few do and many do not. Some very extensively luck out. But few Albert Einsteins, Ludwig Wittgensteins, Paul Robesons or Noam Chomskys exist. It is all a matter of contingency. But considerable talents do not sanction what Nietzsche would call the right for domination of the strong over the weak.

A recognizing of all of this makes me grateful, but it does not justify me in feeling superior or even make sense of an overall feeling or belief in overall superiority. That is at best scant on the ground and it never justifies being a 'superperson' who reigns. Trump may delusively fantasize it.

I needed to realize this and fight back its paternalistic manner. I have had to fight that down in myself. Fight down that Nietzschean spirit. And I have succeeded. But that does not mean to believe that I have come to think that there is any plausibility in religion. But that does mean that it is no longer difficult for me to avoid being inwardly paternalistic about believers. When someone says: 'I believe in God and that there is an immortal soul and a Heaven, Hell and Purgatory', I sadly think how naïve and childlike they are in that respect. How unfortunate they were in their enculturation. Something they did not choose. But I continue to respect them and care for their wellbeing. And I am not paternalistic to them. In most circumstances, but privately, I think that there by my lack of enculturation



go I. And I recognize in the most fundamental ways of our enculturation. I just to a degree lucked out. So in telling people as I sometimes do, but usually would not do in such cases, that religion and most particularly theistic religion is nonsense does not reflect of a sense or superior person in me. Just that in that respect I was luckier in my enculturation. In that sense, I have a very lasting sense a very early influence from Spinoza.

To shift gears again. When I hear people speaking of God or the soul or of afterlife, I used to tend to feel superior to them. Paternalistically sorry for them. Even now, when I see and hear Pope Francis, whom I admire, go on with his mumbo-jumbo before he goes on to make a good political speech, I feel why does he have to candy it up with such mumbo-jumbo? But I should not feel superior but grateful that he speaks out intelligently and forcefully on a political and moral matter in a right minded and emancipatory manner to many whom it would not otherwise be able to be attuned to it. I think in contrast of Israel's present leadership. It is very bad. Think of the way it accords with Trump and how it treats the Palestinians. Both are disgusting. But also think of Gideon Levy, Alan Finklestein and Noam Chomsky and there are many similarly oriented less notable atheists who are so emancipatorily oriented and committed. All of these make one proud to be Jewish. But certainly not of the present Jewish state any more than one could have a belief of even a minimal decency under Trump's leadership. During my time in the 1960s as a professor at New York University, I was told I was regarded as an 'honorary Jew'. I was gladdened at that and proud of that. That I was proud of that remains so. But 1) it did not make me in the slightest religious. That was also true of most of the Jews I knew at NYU. And 2) I still remain so and that all of this is compatible with destiny of Israel's present horrible leadership. But that does not at all tend to anti-Semitism. But I abominate

the present Israel political regime as I do the Trump one. They are in close alliance. And both are disgraceful and evil.

Islamophobia, to retain to it, is enhanced by Trump and most Trumpists as well as, though somewhat less crudely, by some non-Trumpists. Islamophobia is very common in the United States and in Europe.

Surprisingly, it is not always only the ill-educated who are Islamophobic. What should be understood and taken to heart is that Islamophobia is to be firmly rejected and condemned. It is an abomination. Though we should not forget that sadly, ISIS is as well. But we are consistently and reasonably against both. Concerning anti-Islamophobia, as well in many other respects we must also be anti-Trumpists. However it should also be noted and made politically clear that there are not a few anti-Trumpists and non-Trumpists around who are also Islamophobic. And it is not only the ill-educated who are so prejudiced. In this war it is like the old anti-Semitism was. I hope, but fear, that now (2017-2018) the way Israel is run, that it will bring about a new anti-Semitism. Unwittingly the present Israel government does its best to engender it.

Again a shift. Perhaps with a slow withering of religion, if indeed that obtains, people will generally become more tolerant and more accepting of difference? There may with that a claim that there is an absolutely true way that humans must live. However the key thing to see here is that my critique of religion has nothing to do with Islamophobia and indeed embodies an utter rejection of it and as well indeed of an anti-religion which would attempt to close down religion. And that is not because I also believe that such an attempt will backfire. The secularist that I am hopes that religion of all sorts will slowly

wither away. And that I believe a critique of religion will play a crucial part in that. There are many factors at work.

A strict religious orientation may cause a hatred of the for them their other. And indeed often does. Note the Buddhists' hatred in Burma of the Rohingya Moslems living in Burma. They murdered, raped and burned their dwellings. Note the Israelis' hatred of the Palestinians, which is reciprocated by the Palestinians. And this goes back to the brutal foundation of Israel. By a people who had in turn been systematically and brutally killed by the Nazis. Though Islam was not all responsible for that. In these places, we get ghastliness galore.

Hatred or even dislike of the other, both in the gross forms described above and its near pervasive milder forms must end and must be reverted when in any form which shows its ugly head. I should not and need not obtain. But it does and openly. And it sometimes has religious roots.

The Nazis' hatred of Jews and Gypsies was, to put it mildly, extremely brutal, pervasive and often precise. However many Nazis and particularly their leadership were not big on religion. Hatred or dislike of the other is clearly not exclusively rooted in religion. It sometimes has its secularist fans. I do not know Trump's status on here. He, to my knowledge, has not tweeted it in. But then I do not keep up with his banal blabbering. There are too many crude banalities in the world.

It is plain, and plain as can be, that this dislike of the other need not obtain and that it should not and must not obtain. But it continues in its horrible wretched way and I

wouldn't try to hold my breath for its ending. But we must try with all our energy to obtain its ending.

In the United States and in Canada usually Trump like people who are often not particularly religious people believe that Moslems are out to harm them in some way or another. Some Moslems are. ISIS people are. Though much of this is caused by precious hatred and ill treatment of by others. Often of religious Jews and Christians. But clearly, this is not true of most Moslems of the reciprocal treatment of Jews or Christians. But evil smalls rounds incestuously. It all must be religiously oriented. But that is not to say that is needs be. Again I would not hold my breath or surrender my struggle against it, as feeble as it is. We need a lot of cold-headed sanity here. Respect for the human beings, all human beings, is central.

Cultures can be welcoming, but they often are not or not for long. This is particularly so when the welcoming comes to making of cultural changes initiated by newcomers. Immigrants are infrequently not welcomed. Cultural change which can be but actually is not culturally enriching is also often actually enriching. At NYU I felt this with my colleagues and students. Something which the midwestern rural community in which grew up or in North Carolina I could not have had. Or better said for my university days in North Carolina where I studied my professors were cosmopolitans and enlightening I still could not have so robustly than in my teaching days at NYU.

Still in large parts of our planet, though in some parts more than others, dislike and sometimes even hate is pervasive. Such ethnocentrism would not surprise an anthropologist but why is should be so persistent even in the modern world touched by

the enlightenment and generally by modernity is surprising and troubling. Can we not humans by now shake this off? How can it withstand human knowledge?

Can there be no benign but firm and effective ending this in reality chosenness? There neither are nor can be any chosen people. Various religious and non-religious people will and should criticize each other, but to be set to close each other down where they are not harming others should be forbidden. But we must be very careful not to take 'causing harm' ideologically. It is too early just to imagine harm.

Many Christian people in the Americas as well as some others there as well as some Europeans are addicted in various degrees to Islamophobia. But they are in a minority. Still there is a minority that is full of fear and hatred toward Islam. Even in Sweden, fifteen percent of the population in 2017 voted for an anti-immigrant party. Anti-Islamism played some part in that. Sweden with modernity and its concomitant socialism and often laicity and with more wealth and education religion perhaps will wither away. Mosques, synagogues and churches may come to be more seldom attended and perhaps even be closed. But this must not be forced or even pressured. They must not be burned or otherwise be destroyed or demolished. But some in effect may be for people to visit for their beauty or perhaps even to contemplate or to listen to organ music. I remember with pleasure doing so in Hindenburg to listen to organ music.

Jews, Moslems, Christians, the adherents of non-theistic religions, agnostics and atheists are all people who should be respected and protected from harm. There should be no interference with other beliefs as long as they do not harm others. And we must not imagine harm or cook it up where it isn't or where a belief there is ideologically

engendered. This is often hard to identify but usually isn't. We need what Peirce called a critical commonsensism. We do not need deep or indeed any philosophical insight to recognize it. We indeed need a world of kindness, caring and understanding which we do have. We must make it a reality, not just a realistic possibility.

### Final Ending

I want to end with this turning. I, in criticizing the late MacIntyre, have been very hard on religion. I have been almost Nietzschean in my rejection. Yet someone who is somewhat Kierkegaardian-like or Karl Barthian-like might say to me 'Kai, you are very religious person yourself, for you want very much with all your heart as well as your head a world of kindness where there is a caring and concern for all in regard to their needs as well as a concern for their equality. We, so you passionately believe, must have a world of kindness, caring and respect for all. That is a mark of religiosity.' And I indeed echo Marx in claiming from everyone according to their abilities and to each according to their needs. But that does not mean that everyone is to be treated the same. Plainly two-month-old babies are to be treated differently than 90-year-old people. There must be kindness of how and in what respects all human beings are to be equally respected and equally cared for. And that will include where it is possible meeting their needs. But it plainly in many instances cannot be the same treatment. We must be contextual, if you will pragmatic, about what equal treatment in particular situations should come to. It, like everything substantial, has no essence. However it is not sufficient to say it is just contextual. But this, of course, does not mean that we can just say anything.

However what I am concerned with here, whether my above characterized (accurately characterized) commitments shows I am religious or at least that I have a religious speak. Some will say that to have caring sense of is to be religious and that you, Kai, have that. Once a Calvinist and a philosopher in lecturing before a crowd of Calvinists not favorably disposed toward my beliefs remarked 'Remember Nielsen cares'. That is true, but I still try to show here that that does not make me religious.

Being so committed is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for being religious unless it is stipulatively made so by a persuasive definition. Baptizing, if you will naturalistic humanists as religious. But that is arbitrary. It is plain cheating. If we stay with the empirical facts, it is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for being religious. We can, of course, arbitrarily make it so by a stipulative persuasive redefinition. Indeed being so committed reflects an attitude that often goes with being religious. That sometimes goes with being religious. Perhaps always in its best form. But it does not connote or even reveal that one is religious. It is neither necessary nor sufficient. There are naturalistic humanist philosophers. Philosophers of considerable importance with how these commitments but who are not the least bit religious. Sidney Hook, Ernst Nagel, Sidney Morgenbesser for examples. It is just a philosophical way of arm waving of being irrational to baptize by stipulative persuasive redefinitions.

If we could be religious just by having those humanistic utterly secular moral and political commitments I would be proud of being called religious. If all human beings became religious in only that sense, I would be very happy and content. But that is clearly not the case. But while I am not at all religious. And is evident from my critique of MacIntyre that I am in certain crucial ways hostile to religious. Indeed, in certain ways I

share Nietzsche's beliefs and attitudes here. I also am attuned in ways with Pope Francis, Father Berrigan, Father Frederick Copleston, Karl Barth and Soren Kierkegaard and even Maimonides, though I do not share their theistic beliefs. But when it comes to being religious so are Cardinal Spellman, Joseph McCarthy, Saddam Hussein and Mohammad Gadhafi, but they are despicable. And so are certain utter secularists. We need to be careful about these despicable. We need to be careful not to harm them if that is possible without their continuing to harm others. Even Hitler, Goebbels and Goring should not be shot like a mad dog in the streets. They should be tried like Goring was at the Nuremberg trial. Hitler and Goebbels prevented us from doing so by committing suicide.

I do not know where Donald Trump fits in here. He certainly is not in a clan with Hitler but is more like the sexual predator at Michigan State. But even there he is not that extreme. I suspect that Trump does not care much about anybody except himself. Perhaps that is too strong. But while he clearly doesn't care about the mass of those who support him except he cares very much that they support him. But he doesn't give a damn about their fate or care except extrinsically about his Billionaire supporters such as Abelson and the Koch brothers, their financial support and the cheering being on but that is all. I would be very surprised if he were big on religion as his Vice President is though in one of its most unfortunate forms. Not all people who are religious are principled people. Senator Joseph McCarthy of past infamous fame was a genuine Catholic. I suppose some would say not really religious. And the same applies to Saddam Hussein. But he was saying his prayers when he was about to be executed. But to say they were not really religious is playing around with words. What makes some think I am religious is neither



necessary nor sufficient for being religious. Mu naturalistic humanism is neither tainted nor 'blessed' by any religiosity. It is secular all the way down.

There is another thing I want finally to say. A bit of my philosophical life, but clearly not all of it, was occupied with what I have called 'God talk'. I do attack it nuancedly and I believe trenchantly but perhaps mistakenly. Remember I am a fallibilist though by now, like Richard Rorty, I find the whole subject boring. But bored or not I remain convinced it has been established that religion, both theistic and non-theistic ones, rests on a mistake. Along with that I remain convinced by my critique of Wittgenstein fideism. I don't say it is the last word. Nothing is over in such matters. But it may be word enough for the time being. But I now want to call for a truce concerning the dispute in the religion/non-religion disputation. But not because I do not think the issue cannot be resolved. I think, again perhaps mistakenly, it has been rationally and reasonably settled for a long time. Otherwise the subject would not bore me as it came to bore Richard Rorty but because I believe – believe strongly – that there are much more urgently crucial issues we should put all our energies and abilities into. I perhaps should not have spent this time examining MacIntyre. Perhaps an acceptable excuse is that I am an Ancient and I have already done all I can in the more urgent domains that face us and that if I am right about MacIntyre I will have done a little bit for the commonweal.

But what are these more urgent and demanding matters that we critical, actual or would be, public intellectuals turn to? Most crucially is the issue of global warming. The global warming disaster matter that is such a human disaster obtains is becoming more evident year after year. It is horrible that Trump with all his power turns his eyes away and his government's efforts away. The yearly global heat keeps going up. And within

each year greater and greater and more destructive natural events occur. All kinds of extremes over oceans and are very destructive all over the world.

The issue of capitalism is also and relatedly an overriding issue. So many capitalists including most damagingly the big capitalists seek to maximize their profits no matter what. But that can perhaps be attuned. In some limited way. Perhaps they will change to seeking to maximize their rational profits. And come in that way to scale out their expansion of fossil fuel extraction and coal mining. But that is not what is happening. Perhaps they will get out of their suicidal denial in time and rationally control their greed. They perhaps will not take advantage of the openings that Trump makes for them for offshore drilling and for coal extraction. Both of which should be no nos. But I wouldn't bet my ranch on it. Moreover there are other urgent issues linked to capitalism. From the end of the Second World War until around 1980, things were mildly getting better in many places at least in the West until around 1980 when things started getting worse and slowly accelerated until by now things for the working people are getting way bad. Some places escalatingly so. Things have not only become worse for middle class workers but drastically worse in all sorts of ways for average working-class people and for the under class whether they have some kind of work where usually occurred or no work. Whichever their condition is dreadful. Things have become in varying degrees worse for all, but the Billionaires and the Millionaires and the highest wing of the middle class. The world's wealth has become lopsided, concentrated in a very few hands. I speak here globally. Education, pensions, in some places even health care, job security have generally become worse. Professors, for example, do not now have the security that I have had

and still have as an emeritus professor. I do not have to worry about my pension security. That is becoming less and less true.

Capitalism is in a general mess. Neoliberalism has been disastrous. And confidence in socialism where it in some form exists is disappearing. Venezuela is in very bad shape. But not Cuba, though the United States tried hard to make it so. Fascism is on the rise in Europe. Almost everywhere, it is gaining in strength with the most general exception being the Scandinavian countries where things are going reasonably well. Though even with its guaranteed income increased power of the right is making things somewhat more precarious in Finland. Trump's danger is damaging dangerously for the worse the USA's already marred democracy as Trump seeks rather clumsily to bring about a populist authoritarianism. He has a scant grasp on truth or even a care for it, though he is relatively good at propaganda. When I hear the chant of his many protesters in the USA against Trump I sympathize. But when they think they are rightly protesting against his attack on American democracy I think at the same time what democracy will be left. I think 'a pretty lousy democracy'. Trump claims he will make America great again, but what he is doing is to make America worse and unwittingly destroying its global hegemonic leadership. The latter would be a good thing but that is not his intention. He will both make things worse and unwittingly bring about the end of the United States as the world hegemonic power. Of which many Americans have claimed at its alleged wonderful world leadership. I quote bitterly and mocking from a popular American song "Oh, what a wonderful world".

For all these issues they make clear with insight and integrity I have been influenced by such public critical intellectuals as Noam Chomsky, Glen Greenwall,

George Montbeat, Bill McKibbin, Naomi Klein, John Pilgar as well as, of course, climate scientists. Issues concerning religion or philosophy do not concern them and so will a truce concerning religion so that I can throw my own energies into these crucial issues as well. I shall only concern myself with religion where it implies the resolving of such issues.

Moreover, philosophers and theologians usually get in the way when they confront these issues however sincerely. Even Pope Francis when he confronts these matters does not in any important way say things that are theologically or philosophically dependent. No ex cathedra proclamations. The skills go with these here different orientations that go with theology and religion are not at all helpful here. Epistemological, metaphysical, special logical skills that can only be gained by symbolic logic and more of moral philosophy are quite distinct from the vital problems I have just mentioned and other problems of life though there sometimes less securely. Remember Nietzsche's approach to philosophy as being life-value problems and only instrumentally as being truth-value problems. John Dewey's conception of philosophy is also distinct. He said the problems of philosophers are the problems of human beings. He actually did as I and Rawls did. He put it in the old-fashioned sexist way of speaking and writing as the problems of men, but he meant as Rawls and I did the problems of human beings. We have now learned at least to talk straight here. Nietzsche meant and Dewey meant that philosophy has been concerned with the problems of human beings. But that is not what philosophy, generally, means. Philosophy has been and still is centrally concerned with metaphysical problems, epistemological problems, logical problems such as the plausibility of modal logic and esoteric very general ethical problems. Neither philosophy nor theology try to answer the massive problems of life I have mentioned. Neither does philosophy contribute to these

urgent crucial and central measures, nor can they unless they transform themselves into empirically oriented critical theories such as I have mentioned and for problems like them that have hassled us in the past and, if we have a future, will hassle us in the future. Philosophy and theology as it is practiced now just gets in the way of struggling with the problems I mentioned. They do not provide us in any reasonable way with answers to these massive and urgent problems that we are caught with. That if not resolved or answered to in a reasonable way, they will make our present disaster vastly worse. But like Chomsky etc. that I have mentioned above has not Cornell West importantly helped us. And isn't he a theologian. But it is not his theological endeavors and talents or his philosophical endeavors and talents but his plain empirically factual knowledge generation and assorted moral and otherwise normative conceptions and political understanding that needs to be concerned with. That is neither philosophically nor theologically grounded. Philosophy and theology do not work for him here.

Nor is my philosophical training of much help for me in coming to grips with these urgent problems. I have the same resources as West and Chomsky and et al. mentioned.

Perhaps the working with philosophy all of my adult life has helped me to recognize the importance of thinking clearly, carefully and perhaps hopefully at least even cogently. But that way of thinking and doing could have come from many different academic sources as well. Distinctive philosophical resources and claims will achieve nothing more here. Epistemology as well as metaphysics are for the dustbin as well as ethical or meta-ethical theories and logical theories. For example, disputes concerning modal logic. Does a study of artificial intelligence need a dose of skepticism over such matters?



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