

Alasdair MacIntyre on Aristotle and the *Polis*

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Alasdair MacIntyre is well known for his rejection of modernity, which he has famously characterized as a “new dark ages” (MacIntyre 1984, 263). He seeks the elimination of liberal democratic capitalism, and he has called for new kinds of morality, politics, and society that (unlike ours) can provide human beings with purposive, virtuous lives, truly democratic politics, and a society that is a genuine community. The philosophy of Aristotle and the way of life of the ancient *polis*, he believes, provide us not only with the materials to criticize modernity but also with models for these new kinds of moral and communal life. Although he believes that the *polis* cannot and should not be re-created in all particulars, he claims that its good qualities should be emulated while its other attributes are rejected. Aristotle and the *polis* are, therefore, at the heart of his philosophical and political project.

This paper will argue that despite the degree to which he relies on the *polis*, MacIntyre has never provided a sufficient definition of what, exactly, the *polis* is and, therefore, we cannot appropriately judge its suitability as a source of criticism or as an example for modern communities. This paper will consider two

problems with MacIntyre's description of the *polis*. First, MacIntyre uses Aristotle's philosophy to describe the way of life of the Athenian *polis*, but this is a misreading of Aristotle's intentions. Aristotle is not trying to present Athens as the ideal city-state, or even the best existing one. Second, in focusing on Aristotle as he does, MacIntyre overlooks the descriptions of Athenian life that have been offered by contemporary anthropologists and historians. Those descriptions reveal an Athens that is very different from the one that MacIntyre would like us to learn from. The paper will conclude with some questions that are raised by these challenges to MacIntyre's version of the *polis*.

I want to be clear at the outset that this paper does not take the position that MacIntyre believes that we can or should simply restore the *polis* as a form of social organization in the modern world. MacIntyre does not believe we can simply return to the *polis* or recreate it as it was, and there are features of the *polis* which MacIntyre specifically, and in my view rightly, rejects. Slavery, for example, MacIntyre condemns; so too the subordination of women of the kind found in the *polis* (MacIntyre 1984, 162; MacIntyre 1988, chapter 7; MacIntyre 1999, 6). In discussing these phenomena as elements of the *polis*, I do not mean to suggest that MacIntyre endorses them; the opposite is true. On the other hand, as I will explain below, I do not believe that slavery, the subordination of women, and the other objectionable aspects of *polis* life can be as easily removed from the phenomenon of the *polis* as MacIntyre seems to believe. He gives the impression

that it is a relatively simple matter to take what we like from the *polis* and leave the rest behind. By showing the ways in which the way of life of the *polis* differs significantly from his portrayal I intend to show that MacIntyre overestimates the positive aspects of *polis* life and underestimates how fundamental the negative ones were to its existence.

I. What makes a *polis* a *polis*?

Having said that, let us consider how MacIntyre describes the *polis*. Despite his insistence that particular philosophies arise from particular societies and are linked to those societies, MacIntyre seems to have never looked at the actual form of society that made up the Greek poleis in general or the Athenian *polis* in particular from a historical or sociological point of view (MacIntyre 1984, 11, 19, 22, 116, 237-238; see also Knight 1998, 12, 20, 258, 269). Nor does he, as far as I can determine, anywhere define in a precise way what he believes the *polis* to be; instead, he assigns certain characteristics to it in different places. When MacIntyre describes the *polis*, he does so almost without exception in terms of what he believes to be its purpose, which is the individual and collective quest for virtue; he does not talk about its institutions or its social and political practices except as those relate to the concept of virtue he attributes to it. For example, in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, he writes that the *polis* is defined by the fact that it “was the institution whose concern was, not with this or that particular good, but with human good as such, and not with desert or

achievement in respect of particular practices, but with desert and achievement as such. The constitution of each particular *polis* could therefore be understood as the expression of a set of principles about how goods are to be ordered into a way of life" (MacIntyre 1988, 33-34). This is also the view which MacIntyre attributes to Aristotle (MacIntyre 1984, 115-156). In "Practical Rationalities as Social Structures," he writes that the pursuit of the highest good is the highest pursuit, and "This telos [or highest good] is the telos of the practice of making and sustaining this type of political community by participating in it as a citizen; let us call this practice politics and let us call such a form of political community a *polis*" (Knight 1998, 123).

Thus the *polis* is the community that makes possible the pursuit of the common good. He also says that "A *polis* is always, potentially or actually a society of rational enquiry, of self-scrutiny" (Knight 1998, 241). He adds that there is in the *polis* a space for political philosophy and debate, and these actually have consequences for political life and activity; in contrast, political philosophy and philosophers today have little, if any, impact on politics as it is practiced (Knight 1998, 243-244).

So MacIntyre understands the *polis* as a community in which the citizens rationally investigate and collectively decide on the best way of life for themselves as individuals and as a city. Further, it is the *polis* and its political life that provide them with a forum for determining their collective and individual

identities and for acting on those identities. These are the elements of the *polis* which we must try to recover today, although of course the communities which we create to do so will differ from the classical *polis* in some ways. MacIntyre does not mean to say that any community with these traits is a *polis*. Nor does he mean to say that every community that a historian might point to as a *polis* is one by his definition. But we do not know where to draw boundaries around his concept of a *polis*. He offers only a vague idea based on an allegedly shared intellectual project. But this kind of description without further detail is potentially a blank screen on which people can project whatever elements of the *polis* they like while excluding whatever elements of the *polis* they do not like. It would be much easier to examine the *polis* for both positive and negative aspects if we had answers to questions like these: What was it that made a *polis* a *polis*? How did it arise in a particular time and place? What made it succeed, and, ultimately, fail?

It is important that we be able to define the *polis* in terms of something other than its shared intellectual project for two reasons. (Set aside for now the question of whether MacIntyre properly defines that intellectual project). First, if we are to draw on it for examples we must know what, precisely, we are being asked to emulate. If it is the intellectual projects that matter, why not simply say that any community which engages in them is worthy of study and possible emulation and drop the use of the word *polis* to describe such a community? If

there are particular institutions and practices that were essential in the *polis* for bringing about those intellectual projects, why not specify what they were and why they were central? I will return to this point later. The second reason is simply that MacIntyre believes that the *polis* provides the foundation of Aristotle's thought. If we do not have a clear idea of what MacIntyre believes the *polis* is, then it is difficult to say whether MacIntyre's claim that Aristotle's philosophy is based on the experience of the *polis* is correct. If the boundaries of the idea of the *polis* are left vague, it is easy for readers to include or exclude things based on their conformity to a preexisting thesis, and it hinders the ability to think critically about what the *polis* was and what its successors might look like.

What are the kinds of questions about the *polis* that MacIntyre's definition cannot answer, or even ask? Some of these are historical. At what point in time did Athens become a *polis*? Was it after the reforms of Cleisthenes, or with the laws of Solon, or at some other time? Would answering this question require us to focus on laws, or on institutions, or on a particular event or events? Similarly, at what historical point did Athens cease to be a *polis*? Did its acquisition of an empire, and the changes that this imperial rule brought about, change Athens and the Athenians so much that they no longer had a real *polis*? Or was it perhaps the defeat by Sparta, or the later defeat by Alexander? And, again, how should we go about answering these questions? Does the loss of self-

determination bring an end to the *polis*, or are changes in political institutions and procedures enough?

At first glance, questions of this kind may not seem important. After all, we do not always need to know precisely when something began or ended in order to say that it existed at a particular time. For example, we do not need to agree on precisely when the nation-state began in order to agree that it exists today or to specify its characteristics (although of course we still may not agree on what those are). But if we are to understand what, in MacIntyre's view, made the *polis* work the way that it did, and why it was able to provide its citizens with an individual and collective telos in a way that modern communities cannot, then I believe that we must be able to specify a particular time, or range of times, that the *polis* as MacIntyre understands it was in existence. Only then can we look at the institutions that made it what it was, and think about how to reproduce those institutions, or how to replace their functions with new institutions. MacIntyre's failure to indicate more specifically the historical period in which the *polis* was functioning as it should also means that we are deprived of the potential warning signs that the community is no longer functioning as it should be. And if it turns out that some of the important elements of the *polis* are not plausibly available today – if, for example, the way of life of the *polis* requires that the community be able to conduct foreign policy – then we can say that MacIntyre's project will need substantial revision if it is to survive at all. In short,

it is not enough to talk in broad and general terms about the way of life the *polis* enabled (or required) without saying something about the institutions that created and supported that way of life, and we cannot begin to talk about how those institutions worked without having a fairly specific historical period in which to examine their operations.

There are also questions about participation that cannot be answered. Given the kind of activity that MacIntyre requires of the *polis*, it would seem that a tyranny cannot really be a *polis*. But Sparta and other oligarchies apparently can, since MacIntyre attimes speaks of the Greek city-states, collectively. So what level of participation is necessary if a city is to be called a *polis* in MacIntyre's terms? Must citizens participate in the military? Must there be jury trials, at which the citizens can examine their laws and beliefs? Must there be isonomia and parrhesia, the equality before the law and frank speech which were two of Athens' defining characteristics but which would have been out of place at Sparta?

Again, if we are to understand how the *polis* made possible a shared way of life and the pursuit of the virtues, we need to be able to determine which institutions enabled them to arrive at, express, and enforce that way of life. It is not enough to simply say that the *polis* developed the characteristics MacIntyre believes it had without saying how they did so, since many of the institutions and processes which existed in the *polis* would be unwelcome today, even to

MacIntyre. So we need to know which were essential, which were helpful but not necessary, and which were wrong turns or historical accidents. And this relates to the previous set of questions, because without specifying a particular era of the *polis* we cannot specify how those institutions and processes would have worked, since they changed in structure and operation over time. In short, if we are to emulate the *polis*, we must have a better idea than MacIntyre provides of what *polis* to imitate.

As I have said, rather than asking these kinds of questions, or examining the *polis*, directly, MacIntyre views the *polis* through the lens of Aristotle's writing in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics*. Although I believe MacIntyre's description of the *polis* is incomplete, it remains to be seen whether or not it is accurate within the boundaries of the description that he gives. That is, can the *polis* be defined in part by the citizens' shared investigation into the best possible life? To answer this question, we must consider how MacIntyre derives his understanding of the *polis* from Aristotle. We must also compare this understanding to the one that has been arrived at by historians and anthropologists. Note that if MacIntyre is wrong about Aristotle's intention and his description of the *polis* conflicts with that of the historians and anthropologists he will potentially have no definition of the *polis* left at all.

II. Athens and Aristotle

Let us first look at the language he uses to compare Aristotle's thought to the life of the *polis*. In *After Virtue*, he says: "Aristotle takes himself not to be inventing an account of the virtues, but to be articulating an account that is implicit in the thought, utterance, and action of an educated Athenian. He seeks to be the rational voice of the best citizens of the best city-state" (MacIntyre 1984, 147-148; see also Knight 1998, 56, MacIntyre 1966, 60, 68, 83, MacIntyre 1984, 58-59, and MacIntyre 1988, 389). Later he says that "For Homer the paradigm of human excellence is the warrior; for Aristotle it is the Athenian gentleman," and in the Postscript to the Second Edition we read that "Moral philosophies, however they may aspire to achieve more than this, always do articulate the morality of some particular social and cultural standpoint: Aristotle is the spokesman for one class of fourth century Athenians.." (MacIntyre 1984, 182, 268). In his essay "Practical Rationalities" he makes a similar point: "...what Aristotle himself was doing was to offer an interpretation of the practical rationality - and thereby also of course of the practical irrationality - of educated Greeks of his own and the immediately preceding age" (Knight 1998, 124). In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* he says that "the Aristotelian account of justice and of practical rationality emerges from the conflicts of the ancient *polis*" (the conflicts he refers to are conflicts about traditions, not conflicts involving the use of the courts or the laws or military force) and later that "Aristotle's account of

the good and the best cannot but be an account of the good and the best as it is embodied in a *polis*" (MacIntyre 1988, 10, 90).

These statements, among others, combine in an unambiguous way: MacIntyre claims that Aristotle's goal was to express in a moral theory what the "educated Athenian," "Athenian gentleman," or "educated Greeks" were enacting in their lives.¹ MacIntyre is not merely saying that Aristotle's thought was influenced by the way of life of the (Athenian) *polis*. He is arguing that Aristotle's thought was largely determined by that way of life. But this is potentially a source of error for MacIntyre, if it turns out that this was not Aristotle's intention.

Is MacIntyre right to say that Aristotle intended to translate the Athenian way of life into a system of philosophy and that Aristotle regarded the gentlemen of Athens as "the best citizens of the best city-state"? I believe that he is not. MacIntyre never offers any evidence or explanation to support this claim, and there are several reasons to reject it. First, Aristotle never says that he intends his ethical and political theory to make explicit the implicit values of the Athenians; presumably he would have done so if that had in fact been his

¹ By the way, that these three groups are not the same; nor, given the different kinds of education that were provided throughout Greece, is there necessarily much overlap among them. A clearer picture of what institutions, practices, and laws were essential to the *polis* would bring more consistency to MacIntyre's language.

purpose. In fact, when he describes his method of investigating political topics, he says that he begins with opinions that are generally accepted, which he defines in the *Topics* at 100b21 as meaning that they are “are accepted by everyone or by the majority or by the philosophers - i.e. by all, or by the majority, or by the most notable and illustrious of them.”² He does not restrict any of these categories to the Athenians, and there is no reason to believe that he intended to do so. Aristotle also never says that

Athens is the best city-state or that the Athenian gentlemen are the best men or the best citizens.

Given his Macedonian roots and his connections to Alexander, which brought hostility from many Athenians and eventually led to him being forced to flee the city before being put on trial for his life, from a purely practical standpoint it would certainly have been in his interest to enthusiastically praise Athens and the Athenians while he was living among them. Praising the Athenian gentlemen would probably also have been helpful in attracting students to his school. Yet there is no such praise to be found in the *Ethics* or the *Politics*. Indeed, in Book 2 of the *Politics* Aristotle selects for discussion three particular city-states that are said to be well governed, and Athens is not one of them. It is true that these cities are subjected to criticism which reveals the flaws

² See Aristotle, *Topics*. Further examples of his approach can be found in *Ethics* I.4 and VII.1.

and weaknesses in their constitutions; the fact that a city is said to be well-governed does not mean that it is, as Aristotle demonstrates. Yet I cannot help but think that if Athens or the

Athenian gentlemen had particular merits or valuable traits that were available nowhere else, or a particularly desirable combination of such traits, Aristotle would have considered them explicitly. He is not shy about naming names of particular cities and individuals where it suits him; the *Politics* in particular is full of historical examples and claims about specific cities. Why, then, if Aristotle's thought depends on the Athenian gentlemen, and he believes them to be the best men in the best *polis*, does he not simply say so?³ MacIntyre presents a description of the Athenian *polis* and citizens which he claims to find in Aristotle's thought, but there is no obvious reason to believe that Aristotle is trying to describe Athens or its citizens, and there is certainly no reason to believe that Aristotle considers Athenians to be the best men or the best citizens. This makes MacIntyre's argument for the connection between Aristotle's philosophy and the Athenian *polis* problematic.

³ Barry Strauss argues that in fact Aristotle considered Athens to be the worst kind of democracy but was too politic to say so in Carnes Lord and David O'Connor 1991. Nussbaum rejects the idea that Aristotle is simply describing what Athens admired in Nussbaum 1993. For a more general warning and discussion, see Dover 1974, Chapter One.

III. Sources of ethics and community in Athens

In the final part of this paper I will examine the characteristics of the *polis* as seen by historians and sociologists. This will enable us to, first, see the parts of the *polis* that MacIntyre overlooks or downplays; second, compare their view of the *polis* to MacIntyre's to test its accuracy; and, finally, consider the suitability of the *polis* as an example of a desirable form of community, both to MacIntyre and to his audience. Obviously I cannot cover all aspects of *polis* life, so I will concentrate on the most important aspects for understanding what unified the *polis* as a community. This is appropriate because MacIntyre defines the *polis* as a community united by its quest for the best possible life; it is the most direct way of putting MacIntyre's arguments to the test. Put in its briefest form, my argument is that the network of citizens in the *polis* was held together by two things: the citizens' belief that they were superior to non-citizens (both inside and outside of their *polis*) and their belief that the citizens' unity must be maintained if the *polis* was to survive. The city's virtue was not the shared commitment to the human *telos* that MacIntyre argues for. Instead, it was of the kind described by Rahe: "The virtue which the ancient city fostered was not a rational courage founded on the recognition that some lives are too degrading to be worth living; it was a political courage...sustained by civic orthodoxy" (Rahe 1994, I:104 and chapter 4). In what follows I will examine that orthodoxy more closely. I will focus on how the *polis* maintained strict hierarchies and suppressed

individual freedoms. The goal here is not to show how Athens compares to modern liberal capitalist societies – its incompatibility with our world is for MacIntyre in many ways a strength of the *polis* rather than a weakness. My intent is to show the elements of the *polis* which MacIntyre overlooks and indicate how powerful and important they were for uniting the community. Both the *polis* and Aristotle’s philosophy would have been very different without them – they cannot lightly be discarded – and yet in many cases MacIntyre would not want them to persist. It is also important to realize that if I am wrong and MacIntyre is right to say that Aristotle’s philosophy is based on the *polis*, it too would have been very different in the absence of these practices and beliefs. We are of course free to assume, as I believe MacIntyre does, that it would have been better, but that is not necessarily a correct assumption and anyhow an assumption is not an argument.

Let us begin by considering the environment in which the *polis* existed. The most important feature of that environment for any *polis* was the constant threat of destruction in war. For many reasons – political, cultural, geographical, agricultural, and religious among others – the Greek poleis were almost constantly at war with “barbarians” or each other, and when they were not at war they were usually preparing for it. Peter Hunt says that Athens was at war two years of every three between 490 and 338 BCE; Paul

Cartledge offers a figure of three years out of every four during the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. (Hunt 1998, 7 and Cartledge 1997, 13).⁴ A.R. Burn offers evidence that this was not true of Athens alone: "The history of Greek inter-state relations is largely a history of rival powers in search of security through imposing their will upon neighbours" (Burn 1988, 66). M. I. Finley makes the same point: "Greeks rarely showed any reluctance to enslave fellow Greeks or to go to war with one another" (Finley 1963, 36).⁵

Each *polis* found itself in the midst of other poleis which were willing to use force to expand their territory and dominate others. Thus the citizens of each *polis* had a strong desire for internal unity, because they shared something very powerful: "If religion is set aside, the most obvious thing citizens share is a desire for military success" (Holmes 1989, 240 ff). There was a powerful incentive for citizens to submerge any disagreements or differences they had in the name of the collective desire to preserve their lives and collective freedom and to expand their city's power and control (Holmes 1989, 123).

⁴ Cartledge estimates that in 460 about three percent of the Athenian citizens died as soldiers.

⁵ Burn argues that the geology and geography of Greece, especially as these set limits on its agricultural productivity, were not only the main cause of conflict between cities but also of the gulf between rich and poor within each city. See especially Burn 1988, 63 ff. For a description of Athens' warlike history, see Mogens Herman Hansen 1987, 52.

Therefore, the need to be strong in war powerfully shaped the social and political practices of the ancient *polis*. As Rahe says, "Politics and war were mutually supportive: for, while politics bred conflict, the never-ending fear that the city would be defeated in battle and destroyed and that its citizens would be enslaved or dispersed powerfully reinforced the primacy accorded public affairs and gave particular impetus to the tendency to subordinate the concerns of the individual and his household to those of the city as a whole" (Rahe 1994, I:43). Internal political conflict was mitigated and unity was encouraged by the omnipresence of external conflict; whatever their disagreements might be, citizens could generally be expected to agree that being conquered was a bad thing and avoiding it was of the highest importance. And because this threat was constant, it served as a constant and reliable source of agreement and of strength for communal bonds. Rather than being unified by a shared belief in a *telos* based on the virtues, as MacIntyre says, the citizens of the *polis* had a shared desire to survive and avoid enslavement. Their shared desires were for power and survival, not the pleasures of contemplation.

Since the unity of those within the city was sustained by the need to defend the city against foreigners, it is not surprising that the prevailing attitude among Greeks was that foreigners, even during times of peace, were to be feared

and distrusted, and this was another important element of the unity of the *polis*.⁶ Each city defined itself in part by asserting its superiority over its neighbors. Each city believed that its own traditions, customs, government, and gods were the best, while those of other cities were inferior, dangerous, and threatening.⁷ Each city generally had a xenophobic perspective on the rest of the world: “The *polis* was akin to a party of zealots” (Rahe 1994, I:96).⁸ The existence of these external threats certainly did serve to bind the citizens together, but at a price: “For the cities of Hellas, the presence of the enemy without required the suppression of dissidence within” (Rahe 1994, I:45). We will see shortly what was involved in this suppression of dissidence

⁶ For a discussion of xenophobia in the context of what he calls “proto-racism,” see Benjamin Isaac 1994.

⁷ “The Athenians among [the relevant fourth century authors] are agreed that the Athenians are of uniquely pure descent and superior to all other peoples of the world.” Isaac 1994, 130; see also Isaac 1994, 114-169. MacIntyre acknowledges this at 1984, 133. The Athenians believed that they were superior not only to barbarians but also to the Persians and to other Greeks. See Sinclair 1988, 13. Jennifer Roberts says that “Belief in the Athenians’ exclusivity and the significance of this exclusivity for the lives of those who were not excluded – the citizen-voters – seem to me to be solidly grounded in the evidence”(Jennifer Tolbert Roberts, 1994). For Athenian attitudes toward foreigners, see also Dover 1974, 279-283.

⁸ See also Rahe 1994, I:120; Michael Grant (1992, 123) makes this point about both Greeks and Romans.

among citizens; first, however, we must consider the presence of internal threats to the *polis* and how they were suppressed.

In addition to the threats from outside their walls, Greek citizens had to deal with the constant threat posed by their slaves.⁹ The need to keep a watchful eye on the slaves, who usually greatly outnumbered the citizens and obviously had reason to hate them, was a strong motivation for citizen solidarity. The fear of slave revolts was of course a particular concern of the Spartans with their large helot population: "There could be differences within the Spartan governing class, but the grounds for solidarity, as against [the helots], were so strong that governments seldom had difficulty in getting their way" (Burn 1988, 115).¹⁰ It can even be said that the need for solidarity against the helots led to the entire Spartan way of life, which was often praised in other Greek city-states: "The task of keeping the helots down, and forestalling any attempts at rebellion,

⁹ See J.K. Davies 1993, 110 and Thomas R. Martin 1996, 61 ff., especially 65. I will pass over here the obvious economic role of slavery in the *polis*. As Davies says, "Slavery gave peasants the leisure to exercise their political rights and gave aristocrats the means to cut a dash, to live the good life and to hope to control public affairs." Davies 1993, 89. His use of the word 'rights' here is misleading since Greeks did not use this concept and since what we would consider even the most basic rights were heavily restricted by the *polis*. For a full discussion of this question, see Sinclair 1988, 196 ff. and Isaac 1994.

¹⁰ See Roberts 1994, 29; Martin 1996, 76; and Nancy Demand 1996, Chapter 6, for a discussion of how this was done. Demand says that "Any division in [Spartan political] ranks would have created an opening for helot revolt, and this was [the Spartans'] greatest fear." Demand 1996, 126.

dominated the whole of Sparta's history and was the prime cause of the Spartiates' austere, military way of life, which was concentrated on the unending need for repression" (Grant 1992, 284).

Other *poleis* faced the same problem, though to a lesser degree, as they had fewer slaves and the slaves they did have did not form a cohesive population as the helots did (Meier 1998, 261). Having a large slave population within the city had at least two important psychological consequences in addition to the fear it inspired in the citizens. First, the presence of the slaves reminded the citizens of the fate that awaited them if their unity weakened or failed and they were consequently defeated in battle. The Greeks generally believed that slavery was the worst fate that could befall a man, worse even than death, and the constant reminders of the conditions of slavery and the lack of freedom which that condition embodied could only help strengthen the determination of the citizens not to fall into that state: "The real horror in Greek warfare, the great dread that loomed behind that glorious and exciting tournament, was the livelong [sic] imprisonment that might await the unhappy survivors of the vanquished" (Zimmern 1956, 400; See also Rahe 1994, I:43 and Burckhardt 1999, 117).¹¹

¹¹ For some contemporary statements on this point, see Aristotle, *Politics* 1333b; Demosthenes *On the Crown* 205; Hyperides *Funeral Oration* 17; Isocrates *Panegyricus* 4.95-

Second, the presence of slaves served to diminish social, political, and economic tensions among the citizens by encouraging the citizens' beliefs that they were unique and superior. As Michael Hunt says, "Slavery played an important ideological role in the relations between sections of the free population...On the ideological level, slaves were a group against which all Athenians could define themselves as a unity....This dichotomy between slaves and citizens smoothed the uneasy coexistence between rich and poor among the citizens" (Hunt 1988, 3-4). Being part of the citizen body and not a slave meant being worthy of a special respect that others did not merit: "Like their counterparts among the free white population in the American South, ordinary Athenians could and did take their own measure by comparing themselves favorably with the multitude of slaves in their midst."¹² As Lintott says: "[One] obvious explanation for the absence of a class struggle [between the wealthy and

96; Lysias *Funeral Oration* 2.61- 2.62; Thucydides *History* 1.122.2-3; 2.63.1-2; 6.82.3-83.1; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.8.

¹² See also Rahe 1994, I:Chapter 7; Rahe 1994, III:5 ff. and vi.5 ff.; Sinclair 1988, 219; Roberts 1994 263 ff.; Hunt 1988, 214-218 and references there. Dan Carter in *The Politics of Rage* makes the point that the subordinate status of African-Americans in the South continued to serve this function well into the 20th century. Of course, the lack of unified opinion among whites on the virtues of slavery contributed to the Civil War, but this was primarily a dispute between those who had slaves and those who did not, rather than a dispute among slaveholders, and anyhow few in the North actually viewed blacks as their equals (Dan Carter 2000).

the poor] is the schism between free labor and slaves” (Lintott 1982, 258). The inequalities of wealth, status, and power that existed among the citizens and which might have served to divide them seemed much smaller in comparison to the huge gap separating even the lowest citizen from the slaves. The differences between citizens and slaves were fundamental to the citizens’ self-understanding and morality: “In respect of shame, indignation and moral reactions in general the distinction between freeborn people and slaves was the most profound” (Dover 1974, 284).¹³ Note that this is an orientation that does not look up to a higher purpose but instead looks down on an inferior group. It is also an example of a moral code that arises not from shared agreement about a *telos* but shared rejection of certain traits projected onto another group which is then itself rejected.

So, just as a shared feeling of superiority to foreigners helped supply civic friendship and unity, so too did a shared feeling of superiority to the slaves. As Martin Ostwald says, “In short, all citizens are equally privileged: the ‘privilege’ is a privilege only to the extent that slaves and foreigners are excluded from it”

¹³ Philip Pettit says that “There is a great deal of evidence now that the notion of liberty evolved in the classical and medieval worlds as a concept by means of which to mark off non-slaves and nonserfs....[liberty was] the social status antithetical to slavery or subjection” (Horton and Mendos, eds., 1994, 192). Aristotle says that the many contrast the freedom of the citizen with the lack of freedom of the slave at *Politics* II.3. See also almost anything by Nietzsche.

(Ostwald 1996, 55)¹⁴ And Janet Coleman concludes that “Classical Greece would have been very different in many ways if it had not had slavery.... It is not simply that slaves were expedient for the classical Greek economy; they seem to have been necessary as an intellectual category by which a Greek could determine his own identity as ‘free’ and autonomous” (Coleman 2000, 34).¹⁵

Slavery, then, is another element of *polis* life that is fundamental to citizens’ shared self-understanding and the *polis*, itself. So here we see that freedom and autonomy, important virtues in Athens, are defined not with reference to a *telos* but in opposition to slavery, as half of a dichotomy. Without slavery, these virtues would not have been what they were; and if they are to be supported without slavery, much remains to be said about what institutions and practices will make this possible.

Like slaves, women were subordinated throughout the Greek world, and as with slaves “the subordinate status of women involved both a material and an ideological dimension” (Blundell 1995, 171).¹⁶ In fact, the citizens’ attitudes

¹⁴ See Sinclair 1988, Chapter Two, “The Privileges and the Opportunities of the Citizens.” David Held implicitly links the limitations of citizenship to the other characteristics of the *polis*: “The classical *polis* was marked by unity, solidarity, participation, and a highly restricted citizenship” (Held 1996, 23).

¹⁵ See also Edith Hall, “The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy,” in Easterling, ed., 110: “Slavery affected the Athenians’ conceptualisation of the universe at every level.”

¹⁶ As with the slaves, I will not consider the economic role played by women in the *polis*. Of this role, Sinclair says bluntly “The work of women was a critical factor in

toward and treatment of women in many ways resembled their attitudes toward and treatment of slaves (Keuls 1985, 6; see Hunt 1998, 142). Two similarities are central here: first, to be a man was defined by contrast with what it meant to be a woman, just as being free was defined by contrast with what it meant to be a slave. Christian Meier, after arguing that Greek men understood their chief virtues to be courage, circumspection, justice and rationality, considers why that was the case and concludes that "In all these qualities Greek men thought they differed from women; consequently, they cultivated and stressed these qualities above all others" (Meier 1999, 119).

Second, to be a male citizen was defined by contrast with what it meant to be a female non-citizen. Perhaps the strongest evidence for this is that the word "*aste*" was used to describe both the female citizens of Athens and those men who had been deprived of their political rights and dishonored after committing some serious, usually political, crime (Cantarella 1987, 51). To suffer the disgrace of becoming a non-citizen was, therefore, equated with becoming a woman. In some ways this was even like being killed or ceasing to exist, because "In law Athenian women had no independent existence" (Blundell 1995, 114). It has been suggested that the process of creating a democracy in Athens "may have been a

providing the [male citizens with the] opportunity to share in the life of the *polis*." Sinclair 196. For an argument that almost all political theorists overlook this point, see Okin 1989, as well as Phillips 1991.

parallel phenomenon to the subordination of women....Men in the democratic state were defined by their active involvement in political life, and women were defined by their exclusion from that sphere" (Blundell 1995, 129; see Pomeroy 1975, 57).

In part as a result of this exclusion from politics, women in the *polis* were subjected to "rules that both considered them inferior and made them so" (Blundell 1995, 51).¹⁷ This is another important parallel with how slaves were treated. And just as slaves were considered inferior and yet were feared, women could also inspire fear in the citizens and often did: "The Greek masculine world felt a nervous fear of women and what they might be capable of doing" (Grant 1989, 280).¹⁸ Cartledge argues that this fear permeates Greek tragedy: "It is women, whenever they are for any reason not adequately controlled by their relevant male relatives, who typically and predictably engender social and political dislocation, disharmony, or destruction" (Cartledge 1997, 30). We see again the definition of virtue in terms of an inferior group which lacks it rather than in terms of a shared commitment to an intellectual ideal.

¹⁷ For a full discussion of women and the law in Athens see Roger Just 1989 and Derek L. Phillips 1993, 138 ff.

¹⁸ Grant also says "[women] kept life going, but they generated constant, eternal anxiety and revulsion...and indeed opposition and hostility" (Grant 1989, 6. See also Keuls 1985, 4.

Fear led the citizens of the *polis* to feel hostility to foreigners, slaves, and women, and this fear and hostility created a shared identity and a shared need for unity lest those fears come true. These then led the citizens of the Greek *polis* to repress not just slaves and women, but also themselves. Perhaps the greatest difference between the Greek *polis* and modern liberal democracies is that the governing philosophy of the latter is based, primarily, on a liberal theory of individual freedom and individual rights and the former was not.¹⁹ This is of course one of the main reasons MacIntyre values the *polis*, because it was free of the dangers of liberal individualism. Rather than aiming at individual liberty, as citizens of the liberal state do, the citizens of the *polis* aimed at collective liberty from external control for their particular *polis* as a whole. This kind of collective liberty did not promote individual liberty but in fact required the *polis* to exercise strict internal control over its citizens: "In principle the power of the Greek *polis* was total.... There were things a Greek state customarily did not do...but even then its right to interfere was not in question. It merely chose not to. The *polis* was inescapable" (Finley 1962, 41).²⁰ K.J. Dover echoes this position: "There does not seem to have been any limit...to the community's rights over the property and lives of the individuals who composed it" (Dover 1974, 289; see also Rahe

¹⁹ For the depth of these differences, see Rahe 1994, III:Chapter One.

²⁰ See also Rahe 1994, I:34, 178, 182, and 194 where Menander is cited; de Coulanges, 1956, esp. Chapter 17; Coleman 2000, 36; Burckhardt 1999, 57-62.

1994, I:183, Schofield 1996, 831-856, Ostwald 1996, and Burckhardt 1999). Perhaps the most obvious example of this absence of limits was the Athenian practice of ostracism, whereby a citizen could be banished for a period of years by the community for any reason or for no reason at all (Rahe 1994, I:182-183; Martin 1996, 111-112; and Demand 1996, 189).

How did this internal control manifest itself? One way was by the strict regulation of all kinds of economic activity. Liberal democracies in MacIntyre's view tend to give the economic sphere primacy over the political sphere or, at the very least, a high degree of independence from it. In the Greek world economic activity was closely regulated in order to restrict what were seen to be the politically unfortunate consequences of trade.²¹ There were several of these. First, market activity could easily lead to undesirable traits such as the love of wealth and luxury which, it was believed, led to softness and effeminacy (Rahe 1994, I:44).²² Soft and effeminate citizens would be useless as warriors, and this alone was reason enough to regulate the acquisition and distribution of wealth (Rahe 1994, I:46; see also Aristotle, *Politics* 1326b39). Another unfortunate consequence of market activity was that the marketplace was the location for a great deal of internal conflict. Economic activity is perhaps the aspect of life within the city in

²¹ MacIntyre would like to see stronger economic restrictions because capitalism undermines modern citizens' ability to pursue a life based on the virtues and hence a life that is morally satisfying. See MacIntyre 1999, Chapter 11.

²² On the denigration of commerce in general, see Meier 119-121.

which each citizen is most clearly out for his individual good rather than the communal good.²³ This was a potential threat to the *polis*, and therefore laws were necessary to reduce the degree and the effects of this conflict. There was no right to own, transfer, and accumulate property; instead, property was thought of as held in a kind of public trust, to be used by individuals as the needs of the city dictated, especially in times of crisis (Rahe 1994, I:57).²⁴ In most cities there were restrictions on the amount of land citizens could own. Merchants were viewed with suspicion, because those with large quantities of movable wealth, it was believed, would be less loyal to the state (Rahe 1994, I:47). Unlike those whose wealth was in land, they could endure the destruction of the city without being completely destroyed themselves, since they could take their wealth elsewhere. They could not be counted on to stay, fight, and die.

There is another danger connected with economic activity. Trade conducted with other cities led to the import of foreign ideas and customs that could easily undermine the unity of the city (Rahe 1994, 58 ff).²⁵ It is almost impossible to allow foreign products into the city without also admitting foreign merchants, foreign practices, and foreign ideas. One of the themes of Herodotus'

²³ See Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, for a more modern view of this phenomenon. See also Rahe 1994, I:61 ff.

²⁴ On liturgies see Martin 117 and 168 and Easterling, ed., 10-11.

²⁵ See Plato's *Laws* for a set of provisions dealing with this problem.

Histories is that practices, beliefs, and laws vary everywhere, and none seem to be universally sanctioned by the gods or by nature. If citizens' faith that their laws are supported by nature and the gods diminishes, it cannot help but weaken their beliefs in the rightness of their way of life, lead to conflicting ideas and beliefs, and threaten their unity.²⁶ Modern capitalism, with its global exchange of ideas, opinions, and images, serves as at least an equally powerful solvent to traditions and consensus about the good. The Greeks were warriors, not shopkeepers; their societies were built on war and politics rather than trade and economics (Rahe 1994, I:2).

The *polis* often tried to undermine other relationships, such as family relationships and friendships, in order to strengthen loyalty to the *polis*.²⁷ In Sparta, admittedly the most extreme example, practices that undermined the importance of family included the practice of exposing unhealthy babies, since the individual must first and foremost strengthen and not weaken the *polis*. The practice there of taking healthy male children from their parents at the age of seven also weakened the tie to the family in favor of a tie to the *polis* (Kitto 1964, 91; Rahe 1994, I: chapter 5). Even husbands and wives were kept apart so that the

²⁶ See, among others, Sophocles, *Antigone*; Aristophanes, *Clouds*; and Plato, *Apology*.

²⁷ See Gabriel Herman 1987, especially Chapters Five and Six, for the tension between the city and friendship and the city's attempt to control the citizen's ties to friends and family. In Athens, for example, this was done by Cleisthenes' creation of tribes that cut across family lines. See Kitto, 1964, 106 ff.

citizen would love his fellow citizens above all else. MacIntyre is a proponent of the family, especially in its educational role as he describes it in *Dependent Rational Animals*; although the family in liberal societies is not what it should be, he does not believe that the solution is to do away with it, altogether. Instead, he calls for a community which can and will protect and reinforce it. If the *polis* is wrong in its subordination of family ties in favor of strong community, this is another argument against using it as a model. Yet MacIntyre does not consider this element of *polis* life at all.

We have seen that the historical picture is one in which the unity of the *polis* rested on fear and hostility to outsiders, the domination and exclusion of certain groups from citizenship and tight internal control even over those who were citizens. These are all things that MacIntyre would reject. They also do not fit with his Aristotelian view of the *polis*, which enables him to either ignore them or dismiss them as wrong but inessential to the nature of the *polis*. There is another question to ask about the *polis*, however, from a historical point of view. When all is said and done, did the institutions and traditions of the *polis* work? The history of the various Greek poleis is full of internal dissent, intrigue, and violence (in addition to the external wars and violence already discussed). Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* gives evidence of many occasions of violent

factional conflict throughout Athenian history,²⁸ and Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* is full of episodes involving conspiracy and treachery within Athens and the other Greek cities during that war, a time when one would expect that the need for self-defense would result in an extremely high level of internal unity.²⁹

Thucydides does not say that the hardship of the war ended what had been a high level of internal unity in the Greek cities. Instead he says that it changed external conditions so that the internal conflicts that already existed had the chance to become fiercer and more open, since each side now had the hope of aid from outside – the oligarchs from Sparta and the democrats from Athens.

²⁸ See Chapters 11-13 and 26.2, 27.5, 28.1, 28.4, 34.2, 35.4 for some examples. See also Davies 1993, 103 for a discussion of “financial corruption” in Athens and Rahe 1994, I:188 for an argument that Athens fell short of its goals in maintaining community and harmony.

²⁹ Probably the most striking example of the breakdown of a city's harmony and shared norms – indeed any restrictions at all on human behavior – is the description beginning at 2.47 (and especially at 2.53) of the effects of the plague on the Athenians, admittedly an extreme situation. For examples of civic strife and betrayal, see for example 1.55, 1.113, 1.115, 1.132, 2.65, 2.80, 3.62, 8.24; for a discussion of the causes and effects of civil war, see especially 3.69-85. Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*. See also Lintott 1982, and Herman 1987, 164, where he says that “Most major political moves of Greek history – wars, invasions, revolutions – can be explained in terms of this struggle: the *demos*, the lower classes, and the *polis*, on the one hand; the aristocracy, the upper-classes, and coalitions outside the *polis* on the other.”

This may mean that both oligarchs and democrats revealed that they believed they shared more with those outside the *polis* of similar economic and status levels than they did with those of their fellow citizens with whom they did not share such things. Or, it may mean that the desire for power and wealth overcame the desire for unity and virtue. Either explanation contradicts MacIntyre's notion that the shared pursuit of the common good was the most powerful force within the *polis*. The war gave the democratic and oligarchic factions within each *polis* the opportunity to try to overcome one another, resulting in "many calamities - as happens and always will happen while human nature is what it is, though there may be different degrees of savagery" (Thucydides 3.82).

Thucydides goes on to say that "Leaders of parties in the cities had programs which appeared admirable—on one side political equality for the masses, on the other the safe and sound government of the aristocracy—but in professing to serve the public interest they were seeking to win the prizes for themselves" (Thucydides 3.82)³⁰ and he attributes Athens' ultimate defeat to the fact that the Athenians "had destroyed themselves by their own internal strife"

³⁰ This is also consistent with Aristotle, who says that oligarchy and democracy are both flawed regimes, interested in the well being of the rulers rather than the city as a whole.

(Thucydides 2.65).³¹ So, here we have another caution: the *polis* was a location of much internal tension, and the unity so diligently sought proved elusive. We must think carefully about why *polis* life failed, and what might keep it from failing again if we are to take seriously MacIntyre's suggestion that it be re-introduced in the modern world. Yet MacIntyre does not tell us what it was that led to the end of the *polis* as he understands it, making it impossible for us to learn from the past as MacIntyre wishes.

IV. Conclusions

In my view, the role the *polis* plays in MacIntyre's thought, including the accuracy of his description of the *polis* and the accuracy of his description of the relationship between Aristotle's philosophy and the life of the *polis* has not received the attention it deserves. I have argued that MacIntyre wants to replace the ideas of liberal individualism and the way of life that emerges from it, and that he has suggested the *polis* as a kind of community that can provide examples of better ideas and a better way of life. I have also argued that MacIntyre's own philosophy ultimately rests on his characterization of the *polis*, as presented by Aristotle. I have set out that characterization and compared it to the very different description of Athens provided by sociologists and historians. In MacIntyre's view, the *polis* is united by its commitment to a common good, which, ultimately, is the life of reflection. In contrast, a historical and sociological

³¹ See also Davies 1993, 127, *Federalist* 63, and the "Old Oligarch."

view of the city shows a reliance on fear to unite the *polis*: fear of outsiders, women, and slaves, and fear of internal disunity that led the citizens to be warlike and to institute repressive laws to be used against citizens as well as non-citizens. MacIntyre is incorrect in his description of the *polis* and attributes to Aristotle views about Athens that Aristotle does not in fact have.

This raises several issues. The first of these is the question of what exactly the *polis* is for MacIntyre. He characterizes the *polis* as a place where a common pursuit of a particular kind of life (one of virtue and contemplation) can and does occur. But defining the *polis* in this way is problematic; it is an insufficient definition that leaves a great deal unclear. It does not follow from the fact that the *polis* allows this kind of life that any kind of setting that allows and encourages the citizens to pursue a particular kind of contemplative life is a *polis*. The *polis* must have its own identity that somehow separates it from those other kinds of community, but it is unclear what constitutes that identity. This lack of clarity is compounded by the fact that it is sometimes the Greek *polis* and sometimes the Athenian *polis* which we are meant to consider. If it is the former, then it seems that the next step forward would be to identify the elements that Athens, Sparta, and Thebes (but presumably not Persia, Macedon or a tyranny) have in common to bring them all under the same name. If it is the latter, and the phenomenon of the *polis* as MacIntyre uses it is unique to Athens, then the next step forward would be to identify what it is about the Athenian *polis* that makes

it uniquely suited to provide the raw material for Aristotle's philosophy and the new ideas and institutions MacIntyre wishes to bring about. So it would be helpful if MacIntyre could clarify whether he is talking about the Greek *polis* or the Athenian *polis*. It would also be helpful if we could identify when, historically, MacIntyre believes the *polis* as he understands it existed. Clarifying his definition of the *polis* would help us to focus on those particular institutions and practices that are essential to *polis* life and which are merely accidental or even harmful to that life. We would then be in a better position to emulate those institutions and practices if we so choose.

Second, a more specific definition of the *polis* would allow for a closer examination of the link MacIntyre sees between the Athenian (or Greek) *polis* and Aristotle's philosophy. I have argued that the connection MacIntyre suggests, that Aristotle is trying to express in thought what the Athenian citizens, as the best men of the best city, lived in their daily lives is inaccurate; this is not Aristotle's intention. I certainly agree with MacIntyre that there is some connection between *polis* life and Aristotle's philosophy and that Aristotle cannot be understood outside of this context. But Aristotle does not derive his philosophy solely from the *polis*. The *polis* certainly plays an important part in the *Politics* and the *Ethics*. But in these books he is also trying to explain what will fulfill the human *telos* – which he bases on his conception of biology, not on the Athenian *polis* and the intellectual lives of its gentlemen. And for Aristotle the

life of contemplation is the highest life not because of its role in the *polis* but because it brings us as close as possible to the divine. The *polis*, as Aristotle understands it, must be seen from these perspectives as well as the perspective MacIntyre suggests. I believe it would be valuable, therefore, to have a more detailed idea of how exactly MacIntyre believes the *polis* brings about Aristotle's thought when Aristotle makes concepts outside of the *polis*—biology and a conception of the divine—central to his practical philosophy.

This would also be helpful for an explanation of the ways in which societies create or influence philosophers. I have tried to show that MacIntyre proposes a very strong causal connection between the life of the *polis* and Aristotle's thought. MacIntyre believes Aristotle's thought is tied to the history and sociology of the *polis*. If he were to say that Aristotle is entirely dependent on the *polis*, then he needs to address the fact that the Greek citizens would have been very different people and created very different institutions, and Aristotle would have had a very different ethical and political philosophy, in the absence of xenophobia, slavery, and the oppression of women, as well as the strict internal controls that the citizens placed on themselves. He also needs to say something about why embodying Aristotle's thought in our modern society and politics would not inevitably re-create the kinds of oppression and restriction that were found in the society that created that thought. Does philosophy create institutions as directly and unavoidably as institutions create philosophy? If, on

the other hand, MacIntyre wishes to downplay Aristotle's connection to the *polis*, and argue that Aristotle's philosophy can stand or fall on its own, he needs to say more about how philosophy influences society, especially when society is predisposed to reject that philosophy out of hand. We would need an argument about how Aristotle was able to rise above the practices and beliefs of his time (especially since MacIntyre has already said that in some respects he failed to do so) and, therefore, is free enough of their taint to be worth emulating. He would also have to rely more heavily on why Aristotle's philosophy would be good for us, rather than how it was good for the citizens of the *polis*. But then MacIntyre's philosophy would become unhistorical, and I do not think he would be willing to accept that. Indeed, it would be ironic if paying closer attention to history led MacIntyre to give up on it.

Third, as I have shown, looking at Athens and Greece from the perspective of sociology and history reveals a very different *polis* than the one MacIntyre encourages us to see. It rested not on high and noble ideals, but on the fear of external conquest and internal corruption, the hostility caused by that fear, and the repression caused by that fear and hostility, and it rested on the domination of women and slaves by free men. Again, I am not suggesting that MacIntyre advocates any of this. He rejects as "always oppressive...any form of social relationship that denies to those who participate in it the possibility of the kind of learning from each other about the nature of their common good that can

issue in socially transformative action” and condemns Aristotle’s position that women and slaves were incapable of rationality (MacIntyre 1988, 250-251; see also MacIntyre 1984, 159 and MacIntyre 1988, 104-105; and MacIntyre 1966, 98, MacIntyre 1999, 5-7 and MacIntyre 1984, 158). MacIntyre argues that women and slaves would have appeared this way to Aristotle as a result of the irrational domination to which they were subjected; having been denied the use of their reason by their society, they would seem, to anyone who found that society natural, not to possess it. But, MacIntyre says, we now know better, and his solution when adapting Aristotle’s thought for his own use is to simply discard these troubling beliefs about slaves and women, suggesting that we can gain the benefits of *polis* life without re-creating these unacceptable elements. It would be possible to tell a story about arriving at the shared desire for the virtues and the contemplative lifestyle by beginning with the desires for survival and power and the worldview that develops from the domination of women and slaves and the fear and hatred of outsiders. Or one might tell a story about how particular historical changes lead to particular changes in a group’s philosophy and psychology, so that the development of their society determines the development of their philosophy. But these are not the stories MacIntyre tells, despite the fact that at least the second of these stories is perfectly compatible with his philosophy.

I think that this solution dismisses important elements of the *polis* too easily and overlooks the degree to which xenophobia, slavery, and the domination of women were psychologically important in maintaining the citizens' unity in the *polis*. As Jennifer Tolbert Roberts says, "From a psychological standpoint the egalitarianism of the Athenians was made possible only by the existence of highly visible categories of 'others' to whom citizens could feel superior" (Roberts 1994, 262 and 273ff.). And this superiority was not only believed in, it was acted on and institutionalized in ways that linked it closely to those aspects of the *polis* which MacIntyre praises. Derek L. Phillips says that "In fact, the politics of the common good...evident in the institutional arrangements of ancient Athens required...subordination and exploitation" (Phillips 1993, 142). I do not mean to suggest that we cannot learn anything from the *polis*, or that there is nothing there worthy of emulation. But the different parts of the *polis* and its politics and values are tied together in ways that should keep us from thinking that it will be easy to simply pick those aspects we appreciate and discard the rest. We also cannot easily dismiss the hierarchies and limitations on freedom found in the *polis*. As Stephen Macedo bluntly says, "The virtues of classical citizenship cannot be had on the cheap....Whoever would reclaim the glories of ancient citizenship had better be prepared to embrace the rigours of a tutelary state" (Macedo 1990, 98).

I believe that here I have dealt with some important issues in the thought of Alasdair MacIntyre and raised some questions for further exploration of that thought. I should close by noting that despite the challenges to MacIntyre I have offered above I have great admiration for the depth and originality of his thought; it is that admiration that leads me to call for his philosophy to be taken further, whether by MacIntyre himself or by others who have learned from his work. A discussion about how best to do this would, I think, be very much in keeping with the tradition of which MacIntyre himself is an important part.

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