Chapter 9
Alasdair MacIntyre (1929–): Philosophy and the University

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Introduction

Alasdair MacIntyre, who was born in Glasgow in 1929, has been a significant figure within Anglophone moral, social and political philosophy for seven decades, growing in prominence since the publication of his best-known book *After Virtue* in 1981. This and subsequent work reflect the diverse range of his intellectual formation and prodigious industry in the preceding quarter-century.

MacIntyre's first degree was in Classics from Queen Mary College, University of London; but even as he studied Greek and Roman history and literature, he was already engaging with contemporary philosophy in a contrasting range of traditions, principally French existentialist, English empiricist and German Marxist, posing respectively the challenges that life is absurd, that the only real knowledge is sense perception, and that political order is an artefact of class struggle.

This broad interest in ideas led him to an MA course at Manchester University where, following graduation (in 1951) he proceeded immediately from being a student to being a lecturer and soon published his first book *Marxism: An Interpretation* (1953) followed by a co-edited collection *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (1955). The latter indicates a further area of MacIntyre's interest, viz. religion approached as a mode of personal commitment, a form of social practice, and a style of ultimate explanation. His position at Manchester had been in philosophy of religion, but his attitude towards the rationality of faith was ambiguous and in 1957 he moved to a lectureship in Philosophy at Leeds. This was followed by 2 years as a researcher in Oxford and in Princeton, and a return to Oxford as a fellow of

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University College, followed by a professorship in Sociology at Essex. Thereafter he had a long train of appointments of increasing prominence and distinction in the USA: at Brandeis, Boston, Wellesley, Vanderbilt, Notre Dame, Duke, and then back to Notre Dame where he remains today in active retirement, 90 this year but still writing.

In 1956 MacIntyre published an article 'Manchester: The Modern Universites and the English Tradition'. Manchester is one of nine civic universities founded in English industrial cities in the nineteenth century. These stood in contrast to the religious and class oriented ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and Manchester especially prided itself on serving the needs of a rapidly developing city, applying science to technology in the interest of production, and the humanities to mental discipline and enrichment in the service of the professions. At the time, MacIntyre's essay on the subject may have seemed disconnected from his main intellectual orientation, but as subsequent decades have revealed, the philosophy of education – especially of higher education, practised not as a sub-disciplinary specialism but as an aspect of broader enquiries – has been an important means by which MacIntyre has given expression to, illustrated, and set tests for his central ideas about ethics and politics.

MacIntyre's Moral Philosophy: Critical Origins

In order to understand how this should be so, one needs to get a sense of some of the main themes of his extensive and sustained investigations of the status, substance and methods of moral thinking. At the time of his Manchester studies the prevailing philosophical views about ethics were that it consists in expressions of approval or disapproval of character, motive and action, perhaps with the further aim of inducing others to share those attitudes. This 'emotivist' or, in a later variant, 'expressivist' approach denied that moral judgements could be true, or that that they could genuinely be reasoned about. Instead they were taken simply to express speakers' feelings and commitments – if indeed their attitudes are sufficiently consistent and stable to constitute 'commitments'. In support of this contention, such philosophers held that no statement of empirical fact implies any statement of valuation or direction. Certainly we commonly think and speak in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, but according to the expressivist these are projections of personal attitude or social convention.

To some extent such a view might seem to be reinforced by Marxism, and by Freudian psychoanalytic theory in which MacIntyre had also become interested, since both of these suggest that behind the appearance of objective morality may lie subjective impulses and reactions. MacIntyre was open to those possibilities as critiques of conventional bourgeois morality, but he thought that the point of criticising it must be that it was false and that some better set of objective values could replace it. However, he also thought that the very methods of analysis and criticism that Marx had brought to bear on the economic view of society favoured in Manchester

and other centres of industrial capitalism, could as well be applied against Stalinism and other forms of totalitarian socialism prevalent in the 1950s.

Thus began his long journey from the borders to the very centre of later twentieth century moral philosophy. While he was reacting against what seemed to him to be naive and self-serving subjectivism (for though advocates of such views denied the objectivity of morality they were not averse to expressing their own attitudes about how society and individuals should behave) another highly distinctive British philosopher, Elizabeth Anscombe, published in 1958 an article entitle 'Modern Moral Philosophy'. In it she argued that talk of moral obligation derived from a religious way of thinking that was no longer widely shared and that it would be better replaced by reference to virtues, i.e., habits of action and avoidance, the having of which benefitted people by enabling them to live well.[1]

MacIntyre's Moral Philosophy: Constructive Development

In *After Virtue* (1981) MacIntyre produced a broad and deep historical and philosophical analysis along similar lines but with additional claims and arguments. First, he proposed that the alienation of moral language from its roots in particular forms and views of life affected all strands of moral thinking, including that based on the virtues which Anscombe had recommended. Second, he argued that to understand virtues (and vices) properly one has to relate them to the activities in which they are expressed and the ends which they serve, and that to do this one also has to understand the ideas of a *practice* and of a *tradition*.

In brief, he distinguished between *external* and *internal* goods. The former are ones that can be specified independently of particular practices that might produce them. Financial wealth is one such good, as is social influence. However, while an athlete or an artist might become affluent or influential through their professions, these are by-products, whereas the attainment of athletic or artistic excellence are internal goods. One cannot say what consummate artistry involves other than in artistic-aesthetic terms and by reference to actual examples of it. Similarly, the excellence of authentic athletic achievement is not describable in other terms such as its inducing an adrenalin rush, nor attainable by other means such as the use of performance enhancing drugs.

Implicit in this account is the idea of a *practice* – for example art, cookery, fishing, gardening, mathematics, philosophy, physics, and so on – which is defined in terms of certain values and purposes, and of skills involved in realising these. Moreover these ends and standards are inter-generational and passed on by means of teaching, training and critical evaluation. Giotto inherited certain painting techniques and representational purposes from his teachers, but also limitations in his

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[1]Anscombe, G.E.M. 1958. Modern Moral Philosophy. *Philosophy* 33 (124), 1–19. Reprinted in M. Geach & L. Gormally, Eds). (2005). *Human Life, Action and Ethics: Essays by G.E.M. Anscombe*. (Exeter: Imprint Academic).

conception and means of achieving these. He worked to overcome those and in so doing moved painting forward, but his successors found themselves in the same position with respect to his work, and so on to Mantegna, Michelangelo, Manet, etc. Similarly for Newton and his successors through to Einstein, and again for Smith, Ricardo, Marx and Hayek in the practice of economic theory.

Anyone reading this is likely to be a part of more than one such *tradition* which largely defines their own practice and the internal goods towards which it is directed. Thinking about this returns us to the idea of virtues as being habituated ways of thinking, feeling and acting that serve the pursuit of a given practice. MacIntyre's point is that just as we need excellences of character and activity in different fields or departments of life, so in a sense do we need them in relation to the living of life more comprehensively. These latter excellences correspond to the moral virtues, principally, as the Greeks and Romans proposed: prudence, temperance, courage and justice (supplemented in the Christian tradition by the religious virtues: faith, hope and charity). But noting the diversity and complexity of ways and circumstances of life, MacIntyre recognises many more specific virtues, including those relating to our mutual dependence upon others such as empathy and trust.

Beyond Virtue

Some advantage in terms of specificity, concreteness, and plausible objectivity is gained by shifting from moral systems of principles and rules to human virtues, but the issue of disagreement and the spectre of relativism remain. First of all, virtues are keyed to purposes and ends, and these may differ; but also where there is agreement in broad terms about ends, there may still be disagreement about what constitutes the right way of achieving these. Such issues were the indicated subjects of MacIntyre's next two major works: *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) and *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (1990). Subsequent to those he wrote two other important books: *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings need the Virtues* (1999), and *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* (2016).

The common concern of these four works is to show that whatever social and cultural differences exist, there are certain constants in the human condition both in respect of what limits, as well as what enables our lives, and with regard to the means by which we try to discover what is good for us. Again in brief, he argues that thinking about action raises critical questions about whether we ought to desire what we desire, and that leads to enquiries about human nature and what befits it. To answer these, we need to engage in reflection with others thereby rejecting, correcting or enriching prior ideas. In recognising fundamental ethical and political disagreement, we find ourselves faced with competing conceptions of the human good. At the same time, however, there may be a dynamic interaction between these as, for example, when one accepts the insights of the other, but recognises and then overcomes the latter's limitations and internal difficulties.

While this is an abstract description of the situation as he sees it, MacIntyre is gifted in, and enthusiastic about, illustrating this dialectic by reference to richly described cases often drawn from social sub-groups and other cultures. Here a brief example (not one of MacIntyre's own and intended only to suggest form, not texture or detail) will have to suffice. Suppose there is a disagreement between two ways of moral thinking: one emphasises the promotion of general *well-being*; the other urges rights claims, such as the right not be used to serve the interests of others. An advocate of the first position might be persuaded that it was a defect in her original view that it countenanced, or at least was compatible with, sacrificing the few for the many, but she might also counter that a concern for rights only makes sense if a right protects something of value. Next, she might reason that what is of value in a life is connected with the kind of life it is, and that insofar as human beings are concerned, this involves certain sorts of goods: health, companionship, understanding, and so on. In this way the original insight that ethics is about acting towards the end of well-being is preserved, but qualified, through critical engagement with a rival view, now giving priority to *protecting* goods (such as innocence or personal integrity) over *promoting* them.

The upshot of his decades of philosophising – informed by Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas, Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx, anthropology, history and literature, and others and fields besides – is a rich and compelling analysis of political oppression and subversion, cultural confusion and mental corruption, as well of moral vision and progress. His philosophising also suggests various recommendations as to how we might work through to a coherent account of the primary ends of human life, and of the forms of deliberation by which we might work collectively to resolve disputes about what conduces to or detracts from those common ends. As simply illustrated by the previous example, these forms of deliberation have a structure reminiscent of the dialectic of reason proposed by Hegel (whom MacIntyre discovered via his reading of Marx) in which a thesis is confronted with an antithesis, giving rise to a synthesis which in turn faces a new antithesis, and so on towards, if not ever achieving, a final integrated resolution.

Application to Education

There is considerable potential in such analyses and arguments for understanding the practice and institutions of education, and many have sought to apply MacIntyrean methods to this field; but here I am concerned with MacIntyre's own direct contributions to the subject. In addition to the 1956 essay on the 'The Modern Universities' the following are important in the development of his views: 'Against Utilitarianism' (1964), 'The Idea of an Educated Public' (1985), 'The End of Education: The Fragmentation of the American University' (2007); 'The Very Idea

of a University: Aristotle Newman and Us' (2009), and *God, Philosophy and Universities* (2009).[2]

'Against Utilitarianism' was one of a series of lectures organised by Manchester University in which several philosophers and others considered the aims of education. The tenor and thrust of MacIntyre's contributions can be observed in the following quote:

> The failure both of our society and our education lies in its inability to discover ends, to discover purposes which can furnish a sufficient reason for our activities and so render these activities reasonable and satisfying. The root of this failure lies deep in our whole form of social life, a form made articulate and self-conscious in utilitarian moral and political theory. (1964, pp. 1–2).

The point here is that in the face of disagreement about particular values, we regress to favouring policies that promote 'happiness' or 'welfare', whatever the competing values held within a population. But that begs two questions: first, whether other values might constrain the pursuit of happiness and welfare, and second, how these latter are to be understood; and as is clear these questions are interrelated.

At that stage in his intellectual development MacIntyre was reacting against what he saw as instrumentalising views of education driven by socio-political-cum-economic interests, and his focus was on the victims of these forces. In 'The Idea of an Educated Public' (1985) the perspective shifted to the role of teachers and the needs of society as a whole to engage in sustained critical debate about the ends it ought to pursue and how these might approached.

> [T]he two major purposes which teachers are required to serve are, under the conditions of Western modernity, mutually incompatible…The first…is to shape the young person so that he or she may fit into some social role and function that requires recruits. …The second [is that] of teaching young persons how to think for themselves…These two purposes can be combined only if the kind of social roles and occupation for which a given educational system is training the young are such that their exercise requires, or at least is compatible with, the possession of a general culture, mastery of which will enable each young person to think for him or herself. (1985, p. 16)

Although this suggests a focus on schooling, MacIntyre's general point is a broader one, and to make it he moves directly to consider the idea of an educated public in relation to the purposes, activities and context of the Scottish universities in the eighteenth century. Somewhat like the contemporary situation faced by the UK in relation to debates about Brexit, following the 1707 Act of Union (of the Edinburgh and Westminster Parliaments), Scotland was conflicted about its identity and its orientation towards and away from a larger, richer and more powerful neighbour, in this case England. It had to reconceive itself while justifying its continuing institutions especially those of law, church and university, all through informed and serious public debate. This was facilitated by the development of the tradition of liberal arts education, but now in forms that emphasised their relevance, especially that of philosophy, to these pressing challenges. The Scottish Enlightenment was in part a

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[2] 'MacIntyre on Education: in Conversation with J. Dunne' (2002) is also useful as an informal summary and application of his views.

product of this application of intellectual enquiry into human nature and the structure and functions of society, along with which went the identification and cultivation of moral values and virtues and of standards of taste, which together express and reinforce civility.

In order for all of this to happen there had to be a general sense of the need of knowledge and judgement, and that was already part of the Scottish culture of education fashioned in the late-middle ages and reinforced by the extensive provision of schooling following the Reformation.[3] That culture enabled the rapid development of a more extensive educated public familiar with forms of rational debate, subscribing to common standards of justification, and in agreement about fundamental values such as were expressed in a literary and artistic cannon that combined elements of classical and Judaeo-Christian humanisms.

MacIntyre's exploration of this interplay between education and politics is not simply a historical study, rather his point is that Scottish society was able to meet the challenge of social change because it was equipped with a form of higher education that addressed important societal and personal needs, while also expanding the constituency of those who could appreciate and contribute to the debates of the time. Correspondingly, his charge against contemporary education – both at secondary and tertiary levels – is that it is unable to achieve the twin aims of fitting people for their place in society *and* enabling them to think critically. This is because these two ends have become separated. To the extent that someone is trained to fit and function in a society focussed on economic and utilitarian ends (with personal morality and other spheres of value being officially a private matter) they are ill-fitted to participate in debates about the nature of human life and its fulfilment. To the extent that they are educated to engage in the latter, they will be resistant to complying with the expectations of the former. In short, contemporary education fails to address the deepest personal and societal needs and does not equip people to deliberate collaboratively about them.

Whither the University?

These reflections concern the relationship between a view of societal and economic interests and the ends of education, and they might encourage one to see the latter as a victim, or at least as a casualty of social and political developments. Certainly this is often how educationalists portray themselves, as struggling against indifference and even hostility to the intrinsic goods of learning. In his later work, however, MacIntyre produces a powerful critique of educational institutions, particularly universities, seeing them as both complicit in pursuing the economic model of social activity, and as having developed in ways incompatible with producing the very

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[3] The first Scottish Parliamentary Education Act is that of 1496 requiring barons and freeholders (land owners) to send their eldest sons to school, and in 1560 John Knox initiated a programme for a school in every parish.

thing they claim to be committed to: namely the cultivation of humane learning and understanding. Two essays address these matters explicitly: 'The End of Education: The Fragmentation of the American University' (2007) and 'The Very Idea of a University: Aristotle, Newman and Us' (2009). Both also look, sometimes with disappointment, to developments within Catholic educational theory and practice, a theme also explored in the book *God, Philosophy and Universities: A Selective History of the Catholic Philosophical Tradition* (2009).

The 'Fragmentation' to which MacIntyre refers has several causes and aspects. Of the former, some are intrinsic to the development of understanding – at least as that process is commonly conceived of. One familiar image of the growth of knowledge is as a tree with deep roots in shared experience and reflection both past and present; a broad trunk formed of solid common knowledge, and then spreading branches of diverse subjects, themselves further ramifying into smaller branches in turn developing offshoots, so that the whole structure leads up to a multitude of branchlets. The academic counterpart of the image is the multiplication of disciplines and the growth of specialisation within them, leading to new subjects and studies.

From one point of view these are both causes and effects of progress: as we learn more we see that there is complexity in the objects of study and so we divide intellectual labour into investigating the various elements and aspects separately. What began as general physics led to classical mechanics, which in turn led to thermodynamics and statistical mechanics, and to branchings into electromagnetics and optics, and so on. Similarly what originated in the general study of human action divided into ethics, politics and economics, the last into macro and microeconomics, the latter into developmental economics, econometrics and various other branchings. As well as the subdivision of existing disciplines, the last century saw the creation of new subjects such as management, urban planning, leisure and tourism, communication, nutrition science, women's studies, etc.

So extensive and diverse has been the growth in tertiary education (also feeding back into secondary and even primary schooling) that large universities are now divided into 'Colleges' and 'Schools'. The following is a common list: Agriculture and Life Sciences, Architecture, Arts (divided into separate sections such as Anthropology, Classics, Film Studies, History, International Relations, Modern Languages, Philosophy, Sociology etc), Business, Chemistry and Physics, Dentistry, Education and Development, Engineering, Geosciences, Government and Public Service, Innovation and Enterprise, Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Public Health, and Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences. This and similarly extensive patterns and titling of divisions originated in the US which continues to lead the course of university development, but notational variants are to be found around the world in developed and in developing countries.

Several aspects of this are relevant. First, institutions of these sizes and structures, funded by fees, grants, gifts and internally commercialised operations, are mid- to large-scale businesses, and are often the single largest employer in the places where they are located. Second, one of the main forms of their self-justification, both individually and collectively as 'the higher education sector', is as

sources of economic benefit: first, as employers and as purchasers and providers of goods and services, and second, as producers of skilled graduates who can enter and progress in employment. This orientation towards economic demands and benefits has meant that the content and practice of teaching and research is increasingly determined not by autonomous intellectual purposes, but by external markets and social forces. Among other effects this has led to conformism and short-termism in the selection of priorities. So we have seen the universities across the developed world lurch from an emphasis on science and technology, to social and communication studies, to teaching and learning transferable skills, to knowledge transfer and impact, to promoting equality and diversity, to social and environmental responsibility, and so on. Each in turn reflects the real or imagined demands of various external constituencies. Typically, these are the main financial providers and (what is generally among those) governments whose own policies tend to be utilitarian and short term: responding to prevailing economic and ideological forces.

Given his background interest in Marxist critiques of capitalism and utilitarianism, his strong attachment to the internal goods of learning and scholarship, and the practices and traditions involved in these, it is unsurprising that MacIntyre is a critic of the contemporary university as I have characterised it. His main concern, however, is with the effects on education and understanding, both in the teaching and learning of students and in the scholarship and research of academics. The proliferation of subjects and the hyper-specialisation of academics has led to a situation in which undergraduates either specialise too early, or gain only an elementary, and often misleading, sense of a wide range of subjects provided in discrete taster modules often taught by junior staff or graduate students. Meanwhile academic researchers and would-be academics focus evermore narrowly initially to acquire a PhD, then to secure a post, then to achieve promotion, and throughout to attain and retain the regard of their researcher peers.

Leaving aside the issue of what may be spurious or valueless research, there is the more comprehensive fact affecting strong and weak alike, which is that while their *focus* is narrowing so too is their *vision*. In other words, what is lost – or never even acquired – is a sense of, and desire for, seeing and understanding how things fit together. Never mind not seeing the wood for the trees, one may never see the tree or even its major branches from one's perch on a minor branch or branchlet. In MacIntyre's conception of knowledge and its relation to human practical, emotional and intellectual fulfilment, it is not that one is thereby simply missing out on something worth having, rather one is disabled from living well and is likely to live badly, being misled by a fragmentary and distorted view of reality and one's relation to it.

What someone needs, he believes, in order to be able to consider questions about the natural world, about social development, and about cultures and ideas different from her own, is a broad undergraduate education providing a serious encounter with three kinds of studies: *scientific* (including basic physics, mathematics, biology and psychology), *historical* (both recent and more distant history), and *cultural* including 'the language, the way of life and thought, the works of literature and other arts, of some one particular alien culture. So we have to begin by learning, say, Mandarin or Japanese or Arabic (MacIntyre 2006).

A suspicion that MacIntyre has an unreasonably high level of expectation of what is possible at first degree level, particularly as he also thinks that the final year should be available for specialisation, is likely to be intensified by reading this linguistic requirement. Through gifts and hard work MacIntyre is himself unusually accomplished in several languages ancient and modern, and more generally he has an exceptional capacity among academics for comprehension across a wide range of subjects and fields. Thus his curricular prescription may be very testing for students and their teachers, and here there may also be, as there often is in his published work, a degree of rhetorical profusion. On the other hand, it may be that we have deflated expectations because of a degradation of the education process as it has shifted from skills to methods, from disciplines to subjects, and from understanding to the piecemeal and often temporary acquisition of information. The thought that these expectations may be unfeasible (given the current form of mass higher education in which academics are encouraged to develop as researchers, and students are recruited into majors and single honours in part to increase departmental population numbers, thereby strengthening the case for additional resources in terms of further academics or money to employ part-time untenured staff and graduate students so as to free academics for more research) is not an objection to, but rather a confirmation of, one of his main themes.

Aquinas and Newman Revisited

MacIntyre believes it is the primary duty of schools, colleges and universities to contribute at different stages to the education of students. What that means is not training in skills, valuable as that *may* be – depending on what the skills are and how they are used – but the cultivation of educated minds. With his adoption of an Aristotelian philosophical approach, which after his conversion to Catholicism in the early 1980s later brought him to embrace Aquinas's version of this, MacIntyre would be apt to put the point, as does Aquinas in his *De Magistro* (*The Teacher*) in terms of the actualisation of imaginative and intellectual potentialities.[4] Education is a co-operative undertaking involving the interplay of mental powers: those of the teacher and of his students, the latter in relation to the instructor and to one another. Previously I mentioned MacIntyre's concern with fragmentation and the remedy in structuring education in relation to some immersion in three broad areas: *science*, *history* and *culture*. But he believes that, so far as universities are concerned, some-

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[4] '*De Magistro*' is a title given by a later editor to Question 11, articles 1–4 of Aquinas's *Disputed Questions on Truth* written c. 1256.

thing further is required: not just for students, but for scholars and for the institutions themselves to have some conception of how human knowledge as a whole may be integrated, which is itself related in his mind to the philosophical and theological idea that reality is not a collection of disparate things, but an intelligible unity.

One way of giving content to that idea is through the view advanced by Aquinas in the thirteenth century and re-expressed by John Henry Newman 600 years later: that reality is a coherent integrated creation expressing an order originating in the mind of God. It was this notion that unified the diverse fields of speculation and study in the medieval Catholic universities. It formed the basis for the ordering of philosophical learning, for example proceeding from metaphysics to philosophy of nature, to the study of life ('psychology' in its original sense), to the study of human nature, to that of ethics and thence to politics. Diverse fields of enquiry were then seen as engaging parts of a unified whole. To understand a part, one needed to attend not only to its specifics, but also be able to relate it to the totality of which it is a part. In the same way, an anatomist who specialised in the micromusculature of the human hand would not properly understand what she was dealing with unless she also comprehended it as an organic functional part of the human body.

While MacIntyre shares the view of reality as creation, in invoking the ideas of Aquinas in general and of Newman in relation to education, he is not relying on the presumed truth of that or any other religious doctrine. Rather his point is that if study and thereby knowledge is not to be fragmentary, and in being fragmentary not really cohering into general understanding, then there must be *some* unifying conception of reality at work, be it theistic or atheistic, metaphysical or scientific. In other words, education needs a philosophy, not in the restricted sense of a specialised philosophy of education or educational philosophy, though those are corollaries of reflecting systematically of the aims and purposes of education. Rather, insofar as it is pursued in the context of a university, it needs a general philosophy, a proposed understanding of, as the American philosopher Wifred Sellars famously put it 'how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term' (Sellars 1963, p. 1).

Conclusion

As with his recommendations for the undergraduate curriculum, this may seem a demanding and unrealistic requirement. It should be understood, however, not in terms of first developing a complete account of the nature of reality and of human beings and their place within in it (and then applying that to the organisation of faculties, teaching, scholarship and research), but rather as a developing conception first implicit, then partly recognised as presupposed, then articulated, then devel-

oped in and through specific fields of study. Another way of conceiving the matter is to think of viewing something up close, then drawing back and seeing and understanding it better by having a broader view, then drawing back again to see it in relation to other things, and again at a further remove in relation to a yet broader setting. Far from being an extravagant idea this is precisely what environmental and other holistic studies emphasise as necessary for understanding what may at first appear as unrelated objects.

So MacIntyre's proposal is that education can only really take place in the context of an environmental view of its various parts corresponding to an integrationist view of reality itself. As well as serving as a counter to isolated specialisation and partial and incomplete descriptions and explanations of things, this proposal also relates to MacIntyre's view of the logic of practical deliberation and the development of ethics. For there the task is to try to see how different values and considerations bearing on action might be integrated into a coherent scheme, and that in turn means working from immediate and partial ends to more comprehensive ones, reasoning towards a conception of the nature and way of achieving, both instrumentally and constitutively, a good human life. Thus in a way is the circle completed: from ethics to education to ethics, and his more general point is that all education properly speaking is the expression of a philosophy, and that being so it had better be a coherent one.

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