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## What More Needs to Be Said? A Beginning, Although Only a Beginning, at Saying It

*Abstract:*The responses to my critics are as various as their criticisms, focusing successively on the distinctive character of modern moral disagreements, on the nature of common goods and their relationship to the virtues, on how the inequalities generated by advanced capitalist economies and by the contemporary state prevent the achievement of common goods, on issues concerning the nature of the self, on what it is that Marx's theory enables us to understand and on how some Marxists have failed to understand, on the differences between my philosophical stances and those both of John McDowell and of the physicalists, on the nature of human rights and of productive work, on the ancient Greek polis, and on the metaphysical commitments presupposed by my theorizing.

We all of us have good reason to be grateful to critics and, the more telling their criticism, the more reason to be grateful. I am therefore in debt to the authors of these uniformly interesting essays. But, were I to attempt to reply to them all adequately, I would have to write at the same length as they have done. So I hope that I will be forgiven for being selective, for focusing on relatively few issues, noting some matters that need more attention, while neglecting altogether more than one topic of importance. Responding in this way has been frustrating for me. I hope that it will not be equally frustrating for my readers.

### I

*After Virtue* begins with reflections on what is distinctive about contemporary moral disagreement, its pervasive character, and the systematic inability of the inhabitants of modernity to resolve it. Timothy Chappell begins his in the end sad defense of liberalism with a forthright critique of those reflections. Echoing Stephen Mulhall (Mulhall 1994), he asks why we should suppose that this type of disagreement stands in need of explanation. After all on moral matters, so he and Mulhall suggest, we should expect just such disagreement (this issue, 180). And Chappell goes on to ask: "When was it ever otherwise?", citing the assemblies of classical Athens and revolutionary France as examples of this alleged ubiquity of moral disagreement.

Chappell might have noticed that my discussion of, for example, classical Athens shows me to be well aware of how numerous and various past moral conflicts have been. So he might have inferred, and rightly, that I view the moral disagreements of modernity as having a peculiar character. What makes them significantly different from earlier types of moral disagreement is this: those who engage in them on the one hand seem to presuppose appeal to some impersonal standard by which those disagreements might be adjudicated, yet on the other by their obvious awareness that they have no hope of altering their opponents' convictions by rational argument also seem to allow that there is no such standard. This gives to much contemporary moral debate a paradoxical character.

I did not however frame my explanation of this paradoxical character as adequately as I should have done and this because of my attempt, at the time that I wrote *After Virtue*, to minimize my metaphysical commitments. What I should have argued was that this paradoxical character is to be understood as due to the loss of the concept of an *end*, a final cause, a concept central to the practical discourse and thought of some of our Western predecessor cultures, but one characteristically abandoned at the threshold of modernity. (I did indeed speak of the concept of a *telos*, but spelled it out inadequately, because nonmetaphysically.) Something is directed towards its end, the end that is its in virtue of its specific nature, when it develops as it needs to, if it is to be completed and perfected. Plants and animals, including human beings, and a range of types of human activity have ends in this sense. And it is only because human beings as rational animals have the specific end that they have that questions about how they should act have determinate answers, answers that are true or false. Withdraw the concept of an end and those moral judgments that formerly presupposed it will continue to mimic judgments that are true or false, but will in fact only function as expressions of attitude. Hence the paradoxical character of so much modern moral utterance and hence too the differences between modern moral disagreement and earlier types of disagreement.

To speak of the end of human beings is to speak of the goods to which they are directed by their nature, both individual and common goods. And I therefore need to respond to what Thomas Osborne has said about my use of the notion of a common good. Moreover the conception of human beings as having an end by nature is certainly a metaphysical conception, so that I also need to respond to Seiriol Morgan's astute critique of my critique of the modern self. Let me begin with Osborne.

What Osborne says about Maritain, DeKoninck, and myself in the first two sections of his paper is to the point. He is right, both in his judgment that DeKoninck is a more faithful interpreter of Aquinas than Maritain is and in his conclusions that political community is an imperfect and incomplete form of community and that individuals need to achieve more than one type of nonpolitical common good. He is also right in saying that on these questions I have sometimes followed Maritain too closely. So let me try again, although here I can only sketch what needs to be spelled out at greater length. What matters of course is not the interpretation of Aquinas for its own sake, but the light that Aquinas throws on the ordering of different types of common good towards the

achievement of which individuals have to be directed, if they are to achieve their own individual goods. How, more particularly, is the common good of political society to be related to the common good of family and household and how are both to be related to the final good of human beings, that end to which they are directed by their nature? There are of course philosophical questions here. Common goods are not reducible to and cannot be constructed out of individual goods. Yet our individual goods can only be achieved through achieving or at least directing ourselves towards the achievement of some of our common goods. But we will go astray philosophically if we do not recognize that questions about the relationship of common to individual goods are also practical questions, questions that have to be answered in immediate and concrete terms by the members of any political society.

The problem is that of identifying and achieving the goods of political society in such a way that the goods of family and household are also achievable and that individuals are able to move beyond both their familial and political ties and concerns in order to achieve their ultimate good, the good that is their end by nature. And it is clear that for this set of problems to be solved, two closely related conditions must be satisfied. First, the members of political societies must be able to engage together in rational deliberation about their common and individual goods. And, secondly, education from early childhood onwards must be such as to develop the capacity of members of political societies to participate in such deliberation. But it is hard, often impossible to satisfy these conditions in societies structured by those institutions that are indispensable to the modern state and to the globalizing market. Why so? The answer that I will give to this question puts me at odds with Russell Keat, and in what I say next I shall not be ignoring that. It is rather that I need first to provide premises from which I will later argue against some of his conclusions.

Consider first the absence from contemporary political society of arenas of rational debate and deliberation which are open to everyone in the course of their everyday lives. That absence is the counterpart to the restriction of effective political debate to privileged elites. Every citizen does indeed get to vote at periodic intervals. But the vast majority have no say as to the alternatives between which they are permitted to choose. And there is no way in which the elites that determine those alternatives can be effectively challenged or called to account. So the ordinary citizen rarely becomes more than a political spectator. Add to these facts the large inequality of access to and influence upon political decision-makers that characterizes so-called democratic societies, an inequality that is largely, if not entirely, rooted in gross inequalities of money and economic power. Consider secondly the way in which education systematically prepares children to inhabit and to accept a society of gross inequalities and fails to prepare them for the activity of shared rational deliberation with fellow citizens on how their common lives should be lived and their common goods achieved, that often enough fails to introduce them to the concept of a common good. The joint effect of this kind of politics and this kind of education is to obscure from most people in advanced societies the salient fact about their soci-

al order, that the costs of globalizing change, like the costs of natural disorders and the costs of war, are inflicted on and paid by those least able to afford them.

What bearing do these political and economic observations have on Osborne's philosophical questions about common goods? They suggest what I take to be true, that to characterize the differences between different types of common good we need to specify in each case the relationships that must hold between those whose common good it is, if they are to achieve that common good. So, where God as the common good of the universe is concerned, the relationships between those who direct themselves towards the vision of God as their complete and final end must be relationships of charity, expressed in common lives of prayer and sacrament. So, as I have just been suggesting, those who direct themselves towards the imperfect and incomplete common good of political society must do so through relationships informed by shared deliberative activity. That type of deliberation, if it is not to go astray, requires shared virtues, those that are expressed in an active regard for the common good of political community, including both justice and the virtue that Aristotle called 'political practical intelligence'. Lacking those virtues, there will be lacking also an adequate understanding of the particular dangers and threats encountered by one's own political society, including in our own day those that derive from a globalizing economy.

To this it will be retorted that I seem to be blindly ignoring the numerous benefits conferred by such an economy. For of course it is true, as liberal and social democratic apologists for globalization so often remind us, that large numbers of people do benefit from it. And it is also true that in the more fortunate parts of the world within that economy—Norway and New Zealand have for some time provided examples, as now does Vietnam—conventional liberalizing or social democratic policies can confer real benefits and, insofar as they do, ought to be supported. But in the most important political and economic societies, the heartlands of the global economy—the United States, China, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Russia—and in that economy as a whole great and growing inequality in respect of both income and wealth is the order of the day and the advocates of liberalism and social democracy by finding their place within the established order strengthen it and play a major part in disguising from their fellow citizens the nature of that exploitative order.

Why do the economic inequalities due to globalization matter so much? There are four principal reasons. First, on account of the poorest 20% of the world's population, who because their labor is unneeded by the global economy, are left behind in abject poverty by globalization. Secondly, because the growth and the scale of inequality gravely hinders the reduction of poverty. Martin Ravallion has written: "At any positive rate of growth, the higher the initial inequality, the lower the rate at which income-poverty falls." (Ravallion 1997, 56) Thirdly, because, as inequality grows, investment is increasingly directed so as to maximize the wealth and income of an increasingly small minority. Many outside that minority may of course benefit incidentally from that investment, but even the distribution of those benefits has nothing to do with either needs or deserts. But many, as the stagnating wage levels of so many types of worker during the past forty years in the United States testify, do not benefit at all. And, fourthly,

because such inequalities are the effect of the inescapable need to maximize profits that compels both private and public corporations and government agencies to treat their working populations as disposable labor forces, to be employed or to be abandoned to unemployment, to be retired early or to be retired late, to be thrown into the workplace as children or to be denied any function in the workplace at all. When cost-cutting is required, it can take many forms: cuts in wages, reduction in the size of the labor force, the attrition or abolition of pensions and pension rights, the reduction of unemployment benefits and so on. And as to how those costs are distributed, those on whom they are inflicted have no say.

Notice too that inequalities of money and power are always also inequalities in respect of health care, of life expectancy, of housing, of education, of access to legal remedies for wrongs done to one, and of other crucial aspects of life. The relevant facts are provided in Richard G. Wilkinson's *The Impact of Inequality: How to Make Sick Societies Healthier*. (Wilkinson 2005)

This therefore is a type of economy that is inimical to and destructive of a great many of those projects through which in their everyday familial and political lives individuals and groups seek to achieve individual and common goods and beyond them their final good. Even in those parts of the world where the benefits of a globalizing economy are evident—the Norways, the New Zealands, the Vietnams—the human relationships enforced by that economy are apt to be as inimical to the kind of relationships needed for the achievement of common goods as are the relationships that result from harsh deprivation. To be a highly successful investor and a consumer of luxuries, with the appetites characteristic of those roles, may well be even worse for one *qua* human being than it is to be someone who pays the costs of that success.

That this is so however goes largely unperceived by the members of both classes. For the vast majority the institutional structures of global capitalism are perceived as providing arenas within which they will be able to pursue to the limit the satisfaction of their desires, the achievement of those goods which they take to be of most significance for their lives. If, therefore, the view that I have been advancing is correct, there is the strongest of contrasts between how things are politically and economically and how they seem to be to most of those who play out the political and economic roles in which they are cast by the dominant structures. How is this contrast to be described and explained? It is on the answers to these questions that Seiriol Morgan's essay is illuminating.

## II

Morgan challenges what he takes to be my account of the modern self, asserting that modern individuals are not “as bereft of the resources to engage in rational thought about value as MacIntyre makes out” and this because the modern self is not the “ghostly” agent that I make it out to be (this issue, 158). Indeed, were it such a ghostly agent, there could not have been the readers for *After Virtue* that there have been. Morgan makes three central claims. The first is that I have

unjustifiably told a story about the development of a particular conception of the self within philosophy as though I were telling a story about changes in social and cultural life, overstating “the power of philosophy to shape the development of culture” (this issue, 163). The second is that I have confused the way, or at least one dominant way, in which the inhabitants of modernity think about the self with how the modern self in fact is. And the third is that I have given quite insufficient weight to the possibility of a modern liberal tradition, focused on the values of respect and concern for others, one which provides, contrary to what I have claimed, a viable mode for the moral life.

Morgan has advanced a case that is full of interest and I am grateful to him not only for this, but also for the illuminating account that he gives of my thought in relating aspects of it to theses and arguments proposed by Anscombe, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. Let me address each of his claims in turn. Insofar as I may seem to have equated the history of the modern self with the history of philosophical concepts of the self, Morgan is of course right to object strenuously. What I needed to argue, and am prepared to argue, is that the history of philosophical conceptions of the self that I recounted mirrors and gives expression to the history of how in modernity people generally came to think of themselves, that is, as individuals whose social identity and whose reflective decision-making powers belong to them *qua* individuals, prior to and independently of the social relationships in which they happen to find themselves. What made the philosophical arguments seem compelling was precisely their success in capturing what had become a crucial feature of the self-understanding of modernity. The history that I need to write, if I am to vindicate this thesis, has of course in part already been written as the history of modern transformations of family and kinship, as the history of the weakening or dissolution of religious ties, as the history of changes in this labor market, as the history of the liberal discovery of and the cult of ‘the individual’. What has not yet been written is the history of the relationships between these as a history in and through which individuals came to conceive of themselves as other than they are.

What they in fact became was not of course the type of self abstracted from social relationships that they often conceived and sometimes imagined themselves to be. This is why in the third chapter of *After Virtue* I tried to be careful to make it clear that I was speaking about how the characteristically modern self is conceived and understood, rather than about how it is (MacIntyre 2007, 32–33), but, as Morgan makes clear, I did not try hard enough. So once again let me try to do better. In distinctively modern societies individuals move between two different kinds of situation. There are on the one hand roles in which they are invited and required not only to think but to act as individuals *qua* individuals, each with her or his own desires, preferences, principles, calculations, and acts of choice, choosing to enter into or break off from this or that social relationship as those desires, preferences, principles, and calculations dictate. So it is with the roles into which they are cast by the economy, whether that of individual competing in the labor market or that of individual consumer. So it is too with the roles into which they are cast by the political system in modern liberal de-

mocratic societies, where the roles to which individuals are assigned are those of candidate, voter, office-holder, and political spectator.

There are also however roles and relationships in and through which they are directed towards the common goods of family and household, of workplace, of neighborhood, where the key practical question is not “What am I to do?”, but “How are we to work together?” and the primary moral question is not “By what constraining principles should I be guided?”, but ‘How are we to become able to achieve our shared and common goods?’ So individuals are at odds with themselves at various points in their lives. The characteristic modern self is in various and varying ways a divided self. This division of the self is at once implicitly acknowledged and yet concealed from view by the increasing compartmentalization of modern life, a compartmentalization whose effect is to have individuals focus attention upon themselves in this particular role in this particular area of their lives or in that role in that area, rather than on themselves as unified agents. Thereby there is a lessening of inner conflict, but at the cost of a lack of self-awareness. And this lack of self-awareness obscures the underlying unity of the divided self, a unity one key aspect of which is the directedness of the self towards its final end. So the distinctive social forms of advanced modernity would be threatened by an acknowledgment of the metaphysical dimensions of selfhood.

Morgan has his own unthreatening metaphysics of the self, one presupposed both by his critique of my view and by his defense of the possibility of a distinctively liberal conception of the good, one that might inform a way of life in which freedom is a central value and which has the resources to resist the conceptions of market individualism. But Morgan’s account of his own standpoint is too brief for me to engage with it here. One footnote: Morgan implies and Marian Kuna argues that insofar as I have advanced arguments for my antimetaphysical stance in *After Virtue*, I have argued badly, and that in taking the project on which I was engaged to be free of metaphysical presuppositions I was mistaken. About this they are both right.

### III

Russell Keat in his interesting and acute paper—there is much that I would like to, but must resist commenting on, such as his observation that at points there is a kinship between my views and those of Joseph Raz—advances three central criticisms that need to be answered. The first concerns my account of goods. He accuses me of ignoring goods that are neither internal nor external to practices and he lists as among such goods friendship, some kinds of pleasurable bodily or sensory experience, and the satisfactions intrinsic to some work.

I could defend myself by pointing out that in *After Virtue*, for example, I argued that we cannot dispense with the notion of “a *telos* which transcends the limited goods of practices, by constituting the goods of a whole human life” (MacIntyre 2007, 203). But Keat’s basic point is right. I have so far failed to take adequate detailed account of the heterogeneity of goods and I have not

spelled out, as I need to do, the various different ways in which goods may be rank ordered in a flourishing life. I made a start on the first of these tasks in “What Both the Bad and the Good Bring to Friendships in their Strange Variety” (MacIntyre 2004) and in several essays in which I have dealt with the good of truth. But Keat is right in saying that more needs to be said, especially if I am to defend my claim that the institutions of contemporary market economies frustrate the achievement of goods central to human flourishing.

Keat’s second set of criticisms concern my attitudes to such market economies. Here he argues that my criticisms of market economies do not take note either of the ways in which it is possible to check what he aptly calls the colonizing tendencies of the market or of the differences between coordinated market economies of the German kind and relatively unrestrained market economies of the Anglo-American kind. Keat’s third critical thesis derives from his own liberal perfectionism. He claims that antipathy towards liberalism prevents me from recognizing the need for certain constraints on collective decisions, constraints that are necessary to secure the autonomy of individuals in making their choices about which particular goods to pursue in each domain of human life. And he questions my questioning of the nation state.

Let me respond to some of these criticisms, beginning from the only respect in which Keat has misunderstood my position. He develops an ingenious argument designed to show an underlying agreement between myself and Hayek, concluding that “apart from centrally planned economies, which they both reject, the only alternatives are household economies with collective goals and perfectionist politics, or market economies with neither” (this issue, 253–254). But of course I do not and never have taken these to be the only alternatives to centrally planned economies. A local political community with its own economy can be of considerable size, providing sophisticated forms of exchange, both between local producers and consumers and between both and more distant producers and consumers, and yet be made to serve the purposes of the community. If we look at the larger city-states of the past in the periods of their maximal flourishing, or at, say, the Jesuit and Guarani *reducciones* in eighteenth century Paraguay, or at those modern forms of association that have for some significant period of time sustained participatory achievement—forms of association as different as Donegal farming cooperatives, the state of Kerala in Southern India, the municipality of Bologna under Communist rule—we find excellent examples of how local market relationships can be put to use to serve local common goods, both through market exchanges within the local society and through the right, even if difficult, kind of market relationships with the larger economy. What matters is that the members of the community should be able to distinguish between market relationships that serve their common good and those that do not and should be able to act accordingly. The politics of such local societies is in key part a matter of promoting the right kind of market relationships and protecting the community against the wrong kind.

Keat does not acknowledge such possibilities, perhaps because the concept of the common good seems to play no part in his analysis, perhaps because of his too hopeful view of what is possible in contemporary capitalism. It is this



latter that seems to mislead him in his liberal perfectionist aspirations. Keat looks for a social order in which individuals exercise their autonomy in choosing between alternative sets of goods and alternative conceptions of a good life. But within present day market economies, whether of the Anglo-American or of the German kind, this possibility is open only to a minority whose privileged position depends upon the kind of education to which they had access and their present place in the labor market. To give to every child in a local community the kind of education that they need both to participate fully and reflectively in the decision-making of their community about common goods and to choose equally reflectively between alternative concepts of the good life would require a major shift in resources of a kind incompatible with the workings of the labor market in any type of capitalist economy. This is why I take Keat's combination of belief in a restrained and reformed capitalism with his liberal perfectionism to be an attractive but impossible dream.

I spoke earlier of Chappell's defence of liberalism as in the end sad and the same feeling is evoked by Keat. The sadness does not derive from their defence of liberal principles—which generally need radical reformulation rather than outright rejection (see my discussion of Mill in MacIntyre 2006a)—but from the fact that the effect of the invocation of these principles in defense of the state-and-the-market is in practice to undermine just those humane values to which Chappell and Keat give their theoretical allegiance.

#### IV

My disagreements with Paul Blackledge are of a different kind. His summary of the views that I addressed in "The *Theses on Feuerbach*: A Road Not Taken" is admirably lucid and accurate, as is his account of the theoretical twists and turns of those Marxist thinkers who provide the basis for his response to my views. He is of course right in his claim that my conclusions are inadequately supported, unless I am able to reply to those theorists. But a full and sufficient reply must be a task for another time. What I am able to do here is twofold: to say something both about the distinctive character of Marxist theory and why the problem that Marx identified in the third of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, but never resolved, is so important for it, and about why Lenin too failed to resolve this problem.

The distinctive character of Marxist theory can be brought out by contrasting it with a type of theory that Marx rejected in the third thesis. Such a theory explains to an external observer of some social system why those who, unlike himself, are parts of that system must behave as they do, both why their reasons, motives, and actions are what they are and why, given that their reasons and motives are what they are, the outcome of their actions must be what it is, and also why those participants remain unaware of how their reasons, motives, and actions are to be explained. Such an external observer, because he has identified the causal factors which make the individuals within the system reason, choose, and act as they do, has taken a first step, but only a first step, towards being

able to alter the action of these individuals. Whether he is able to do so or not depends upon whether it is in his power to intervene, so that some of the relevant causal factors are neutralized and replaced by other causal influences under the control of the external observer. But such an observer sees himself as outside the system and exempt from the kind of causal determination to which the participants in the system are subject.

Marx's theory of the development and workings of capitalism is of quite another kind. He does not understand himself as an external observer, but as someone who from within the system has acquired an understanding of its hitherto predetermined workings, an understanding that will, so his theory tells him, come to be shared to a significant degree by large sections of the working class. What this shared understanding provides is the basis for a new kind of collective agency. The working class, informed by such an understanding, will be able to respond to the pressures exerted on them in the labor market and the workplace, so that the outcome of those pressures will be a quite new kind of politics through which the working class will move towards appropriating and exercising power, using that power to move from capitalism towards communism through an intervening socialist stage. The act of understanding is itself potentially transformative, enabling the working-class and their intellectual allies, the Marxist theorists, to break free from the otherwise predetermined ongoing economic development of capitalism.

Unhappily however it was possible to read Marx as saying that the development of working-class understanding and the movement of the working class and their allies towards socialism was itself predetermined, a movement as law-governed as the development of capitalism had been. Engels at times and Plekhanov understood Marx in this way, arguing that individuals could influence the course of history, but only within limits set by the predetermined movement of societies towards predictable outcomes. It was one aspect of Lenin's greatness that he recognized the difference between Marx's theory and its distortion by Plekhanov and so identified a need for decisive revolutionary intervention by those with the relevant theoretical resources. But Lenin unfortunately took for granted, as did other Marxist theorists, as did Marx himself, the answer to a key question posed by Marx's analysis: What goals will members of the working-class—or peasants or others—have good reason to make their own, once they have acquired the relevant understanding, once they have understood the workings of a capitalist economy and their own place within it? Lenin, like Marx, Engels, and Plekhanov, takes it for granted that the only goals that workers could have good reason to make their own are the goals of socialism and communism, defined as they are in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, and that, given time and opportunity, this is the conclusion at which workers will in fact arrive.

Therefore, when working class individuals and groups set themselves a variety of different and not always socialist goals, influenced perhaps by anarchists or by their reading of *Rerum Novarum* or by Péguy or by Methodism, the only conclusion open to Marxist theorists was that such workers had been miseducated, that they must have fallen victims to ideological distortion. Marxist theorists

had become committed to the view that they, the theorists, knew in advance what conclusions the working-class had to come to and would come to, if they were to be accounted rational. But this was massively to miss the point that, when workers and others, by becoming aware of the nature of capitalism, begin to put in question its power over them and to threaten that power, they open up genuinely new possibilities. Implicitly or explicitly they ask the question: ‘What is our common good?’ and with it the questions “Who are we?” and “What must our relationship be to those with whom we share this common good?” and “What virtues do we therefore need?” And to these Aristotelian and Thomistic questions, industrial workers, small farmers, and others have given and continue to give a variety of answers, some of them of course deeply mistaken. But what mattered was and is that they should ask and answer these questions for themselves rather than assent to the prefabricated answers of theorists. Of course workers, small farmers, and others all need to engage in dialogue with theorists, but in the kind of dialogue in which both parties are prepared to learn from the other.

Worse still, Marxist theorists not only were often impatient with workers and peasants who thought for themselves, but, on some questions that confront anyone taking power in a modern society, they brought with them no well thought out answers. So they had never thought through sufficiently the difficulties of the relationships between town and country, between agriculture and industry, between people and the land that they inhabit, assuming that the road to progress must run through intensive industrialization. They had, for example, rarely, if ever, asked what different forms cooperative farming might take, one of the causes of the failure of Soviet collectivization.

None of this became fully apparent while Lenin was alive. Lenin’s greatest gift—and he had many—was in the exercise of practical judgment in response to moments of crisis. And the history of Russia from 1917 onwards was a history of one crisis after another, each met by Lenin and Trotsky with a set of brilliant but sometimes dangerous improvisations; dangerous, that is, to the Soviet future. It is to be regretted that the counterpart to the reactionary myth of Lenin as the precursor of Stalin has too often been the myth of Lenin as the-Marxist-who-never-(well, hardly ever)-made-a-mistake. And it is even more to be regretted that this myth has helped to make it difficult to disentangle that in Marxism—above all, but not only its understanding of capitalism—which has made it indispensable to any worthwhile contemporary politics and that in Marxism which needs to be rejected.

The most important thought that Marxist theorists have been unable to entertain is that the rational self-determination of workers, peasants, and others might not lead to socialism and that ‘the road to socialism’ (itself an unfortunate metaphor) leads neither to rational self-determination nor indeed to socialism. This inability is not unrelated to a conceptual failure, the failure to understand adequately what rational self-determination involves. And that in turn has its roots in Marx’s failure to resolve the issues that he posed in the third of the *Theses on Feuerbach*. None of this constitutes even the beginning of a reply to

Blackledge. What it does is to supply some of the premises from which I would be arguing in any reply.

I would not however want to end on a negative note about Marxism. It is not only from Marx's critique of capitalism, but also from his insistence on understanding theories as expressions of practice, his mode of writing history, his critiques of Smith and Ricardo that we still need to learn, something that becomes evident once again in Bill Bowring's discussion of human rights.

## V

Bowring is generous in identifying common ground between my all too brief remarks about rights and his own rich and detailed treatment. Let me say at once that his account is greatly superior to mine and that he has put both Marx and Aristotle to far better use than I have done, going importantly beyond John Tasioulas, who rightly chided me for my too negative stance and for not recognizing the possibility of and the need for an Aristotelian grounding for a proper understanding of rights (Tasioulas 2003, 26). Nonetheless there is something to be said in defence of my negative stance, something that needs to be integrated into the larger view taken by Bowring.

It matters that eighteenth century claims, whether American or French, that there are rights that attach to individuals as such and that ascriptions of such rights can function as first and evident premises in our practical reasoning, are mistaken, that rights thus conceived are fictions. We need to reach conclusions about what rights human beings have or should have, but these are to be derived from quite other types of premise, from premises about the common good and about what both justice and generosity, virtues that are directed towards the common good, require in this or that particular situation. What justice as a virtue, both of individuals and as institutionally embodied, contributes to human flourishing is a regard for need, for desert, and for merit, and a recognition of the types of wrong that may be inflicted by a disregard for any of these, and a measure for the adequacy of remedies for such wrongs. The institutionalization of some of those rights ascribed by the American and French revolutionaries accords with the requirements of justice thus understood, but the institutionalization of others is incompatible with the achievement of justice. Marx's critique of those rights, quoted by Bowring (this issue, 211–212), although framed in very different terms from mine, is highly relevant: “[...] the right of men to liberty is based not on the association of man with man [...] It is the right [...] of the restricted individual, withdrawn into himself [...]”

It was about this characteristic of such rights that I was speaking when I remarked how appeals to such rights are used “to dissolve the bonds, and undermine the authority, of all institutions intermediate between the individual on the one hand and the government and the justice system on the other, such institutions as families, schools and churches” (MacIntyre 1991, 105). The conception of rights and the political use of that conception which I was then attacking I took to be characteristic of Thatcherite conservatism, epitomized by Margaret

Thatcher's brash assertion that there is no such thing as society. I am therefore puzzled that Bowring should appeal to it as evidence of an increasing conservatism in my views. But that is a minor point.

The major point is that the movement from and beyond what Bowring calls the first generation of human rights to the second and third generations involves not only additions to the catalogue of rights, but also radical criticism of how initially human rights were conceived and catalogued. And on this I take it that Bowring and I are in substantial agreement.

## VI

Benedict Smith in his insightful and suggestive examination of possible relationships between my positions and those of John McDowell opens up inescapable philosophical issues. And it could scarcely be otherwise in any discussion concerned with McDowell, whose work rightly has so central a place in recent philosophy. What Smith says about those matters on which he takes it that McDowell and I agree—or are close to agreement—is accurate. But he does not reckon sufficiently with the extent of our disagreements, and perhaps, if he had done so, our agreements would have to be viewed differently. What are those disagreements?

Smith takes careful note of my judgment that McDowell draws too sharp a line between the capacities of human beings and those of some nonhuman animals. But he does not consider—and how could he have done, since I have never spelled out my own view in sufficient detail in published writing—the larger background disagreements which are presupposed by that judgment. Fundamental to McDowell's view of things is the contrast that he draws between “the organization of the space of reasons and the structure of the realm” of the laws of nature, as identified by the natural sciences. (McDowell, 1994, 85) And this is a contrast that I am unwilling to draw. I agree with McDowell in his rejection of any scientific reductive naturalism that reinterprets our concepts of reason-giving and reason-evaluating, of intention and intentionality, so that what is distinctive about human experience and activity disappears from view. On the contrary I believe that no scientific understanding of nature is adequate that cannot find a place for and give an account of how distinctively human activity, reason-giving and reason-evaluating activity, informed by intention and intentionality, shapes nature, so that, for example, much of the surface of the earth is now what it is, many landscapes are what they are, because of the conjunction of the exercise of two very different kinds of causal power, one explicable wholly in geological and, ultimately, in physical terms, one explicable only in human terms.

Many philosophers of course do believe and have believed that there are no distinctively human causal powers. When what they are apt to call a mental event seems to bring about some physical event or state of affairs, they take it that that mental event must itself be identical with or supervene upon some physical event and that the relation of cause and effect holds only between that physical event and the event or state of affairs that was brought about. All

genuine causal powers are, on their view, explicable only in the terms of the physicist. So why do I believe otherwise? In part I do so because everyone, including such philosophers, does in fact almost all the time believe otherwise, something made evident in the practice of our everyday lives, in which they and we constantly and confidently ascribe distinctive causal powers to ourselves and to other human beings. And in part I do so because I do not believe that such philosophers can give an intelligible account of what is going on in a laboratory experiment in which, say, a particular beam of light is polarized, because and only because some particular experimental physicist had decided that it should be so polarized, just in that way just at that time and just at that place, so that her students in Physics 101 would be able to understand what polarization is. Unless the physicist's reasons and intentions act as causes, we have no explanation of that particular reason- and intention-shaped physical event, of what made it reason-shaped and intention-shaped in the way that it was.

Both Aristotle and Marx understood very well that human beings impose new and distinctively human forms upon material nature. And, although human beings are the most striking agents in this remaking of nature, it is also true that rabbits impose new and distinctively rabbit forms upon material nature, wolves new and distinctively wolverine forms. Moreover the same kind of causality is at work in the human world as in the rest of nature. Reasons not only can be causes, they have causes. And judgments to be made about human beings are often of this form: "His reasons for so acting are discreditable, because expressions of an unrecognized will to power, which is the result of his neurophysiology and biochemistry." How evaluation and explanation are thereby related—are indeed sometimes inseparable—needs of course to be explained and argued for, but I have perhaps said enough to make it clear how different my overall view of things is from McDowell's or from that of anyone else who follows Kant in distinguishing sharply between a realm where scientific explanations are in place and normative considerations have no place and a realm where normative judgments are in place and the explanations characteristic of the natural sciences have no place. Given this, it is unsurprising that McDowell's relationship to Aristotle in his work in moral philosophy is very different from my own, even though both of us claim to be in some sense Aristotelians. For McDowell goes much further than even I ever did in treating the Aristotle of the texts on ethics as a different philosopher from the Aristotle of the texts on metaphysics. Since I have discussed my disagreements with McDowell concerning Aristotle's ethics elsewhere (in MacIntyre 2006b), I shall say no more here.

## VII

I have followed Aristotle and Marx in speaking of the ways in which human beings transform material nature by imposing new and distinctively human forms upon it, from flint arrowheads and cave paintings to the drainage systems on which modern cities depend and such marvels as Miralles' and Tagliabue's Scottish Parliament building. Those transformations are the outcome of art and

labor. It was one of Aristotle's greatest defects that his understanding of art, *techne*, was not matched by his understanding of labor. What Aristotle failed to understand—among other things—was that it is in and through our engagement in such laborious and productive activities as farming, construction work and the like that a number of virtues much needed in our individual and communal lives are developed and exercised. Doing one's work well rather than badly and recognizing the dependence of one's own work on the work of a wide variety of others, and therefore how much one is in debt to those others, are as important in the moral life as telling the truth and keeping promises. And it is of course not only Aristotle who has failed to recognize this.

In the prefaces to books published by teachers in universities we often find gratitude expressed to colleagues or funding agencies, less often, but occasionally to librarians and secretaries, but rarely, if ever, to those janitors, cleaners, and security guards who make the academic life possible, let alone to those migrant farm workers, truck drivers, and supermarket workers, but for whom university teachers would not eat (and count me among those who need to be chided). It is therefore salutary that Cary J. Nederman should have shown so clearly and compellingly the place that there is for an adequate treatment of productive work within a genuinely Aristotelian account of social and political life. It has been remarked by several commentators that Aristotle's derogatory remarks about women are put in question at various points in his own texts by the inconsistencies into which he is forced. Nederman has now shown that the same holds of his derogatory remarks about the labors of farmers, craftsmen, and others. What he has to say about the nature of productive activity cannot be reconciled with those remarks. And so it is not surprising that some medieval writers who were deeply indebted to Aristotle had, unlike Aristotle, no difficulty in recognizing the significance of the mechanical arts and the skills and virtues of those engaged in them.

To Nederman's excellent account I have only one thing to add: the medieval thinkers whom he cites were indebted to St. Benedict as well as to Aristotle and it is in part Benedict's understanding of work that has found a place within their Aristotelian framework. It matters that Benedict's treatment of work goes further than Aristotle could ever have done. For on the Benedictine view working is one way of praying. And it is only possible to offer one's work to God as prayer, if one is also able to offer it to one's neighbors as a contribution to the communal life that is sustained by it. Much work of course is necessarily tedious and fatiguing. But, if in addition it is carried out under oppressive and exploitative conditions, if it is organized so that the maximization of surplus value to be appropriated by others is the overriding consideration in organizing it, then work becomes something inflicted on the worker, rather than such a contribution. This is why strong and independent trade unions, controlled as far as possible from their grass roots, are necessary for the good life under any form of capitalism. This is why strike action, provided that the striking workers have some chance of success, is almost always to be supported.

## VIII

I am usually hesitant to comment on discussions of my own development, since others may well be more perceptive in considering the evidence provided by my past and present writings than I am. But sometimes, when those discussions involve misconstructions of my present positions, it is worth commenting. Such claims often concern the relationship of *After Virtue* to my later writings and since, as I made clear in the prologue to the third edition of *After Virtue* (MacIntyre 2007, ix–xvi), I have not during the past twenty-six years changed my mind about its central theses, what I have to say now will be seriously misunderstood if the continuity between *After Virtue* and my later writings is not recognized. Marian Kuna understands this very well. For he recognizes what kind of change it was, when I moved from the project of presenting Aristotle's ethics as an ethics without metaphysical presuppositions to a recognition that Aristotle's ethics cannot be made fully intelligible, let alone justifiable, if its metaphysical dimensions are excluded from view. It was not that I had up to a certain time succeeded in avoiding metaphysical presuppositions. It was rather that in my presentation and defence of Aristotle's ethics I had from the outset presupposed certain metaphysical truths, but only at a certain point in time recognized that this had to be so. My own understanding of my earlier project was therefore inadequate, but in retrospect seems not to have damaged the project itself. And with the movement from *After Virtue* to *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* I corrected my earlier misunderstanding.

Why did I make that earlier mistake? Partly it was because I was still making too many concessions to the antimetaphysical temper of so much of the philosophy in which I had been brought up. But partly it was because I had failed to give due importance to a central characteristic of Aristotle's treatment of issues in ethics and politics. Aristotle enables us to understand what it is to be a rational agent aiming at the achievement of the human good both from the standpoint of such an agent and from the standpoint of an observer, a philosophically informed and enquiring observer, weaving together a first-person and a third-person account, and relying on the reader to distinguish them and to recognize that each presupposes the other. But in *After Virtue* I concentrated almost exclusively on the first and did not reckon sufficiently with the second.

On Aristotle's view an agent who has learned to value the temperateness, courage, and justice of those others who educated him into the habits that issue in his present choices has to ask: What would it be for me to be temperate or courageous or just in this particular situation? And in the course of reflecting on and correcting his judgments and his choices he will gradually move towards a more general grasp of what that good is for the sake of which he is acting as he does. The philosophical enquirer who asks as an external observer what it is for a human being to flourish or to fail to flourish, who asks what the good of human beings is, finds that to spell out a justifiable answer he has to move towards a characterization of the types of situation in which particular agents find themselves. That is, to make progress from either point of view, whether that of the theoretically reasoning observer or that of the practically reasoning



agent, is to move towards the standpoint of the other. Yet the range of concepts that need to find application in each of these enterprises is not quite the same and the types of justification that each offers for his judgments are significantly different.

The explanations of the observer transcend the limitations of the particular agent's situation, both in that they identify as failures or as problematic actions that the agent at the time of acting failed to identify as such (for, if he had done, he would not have acted thus), and in that they rely on conceptions of potentiality and actuality and of the ordering of causes in teleological explanations which generally find no place in an agent's practical reasoning. But an agent's claim to have acted rightly in some particular situation always presupposes that his action is to be explained in one way rather than another. It was this connection between practical judgment and action on the one hand and explanation on the other to which I had accorded insufficient importance while writing *After Virtue*, neglecting questions of explanation. And since it is Aristotle's explanations that presuppose his metaphysical claims, I failed to understand the connection between Aristotle's ethics and his metaphysics. How did I later come to understand it?

It was through reading Aquinas. For Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle integrates the first-person perspective of the rational agent and the third-person perspective of the philosophically enquiring observer, so that one cannot fail to note the metaphysics in the ethics. And it turned out that my recognition of the metaphysical presuppositions of Aristotle's ethics was also a recognition of what had been my own unacknowledged presuppositions. So the correction of the inadequacies of my earlier views preserved a continuity with those views, as Kuna rightly observes. Alex Bavister-Gould however thinks otherwise.

Bavister-Gould has some perceptive and telling points to make, for which I am in his debt. My principal quarrel is with his overall narrative. Bavister-Gould, for example, thinks that I suffered "a deep crisis of faith" (this issue, 73) in the early 1970's. Alas! I was not myself aware of it at the time or since. It was after all very much earlier that I had ceased to believe in God. And it was still to be quite some time before I seriously reopened the question of God's existence. It is true that I sometimes found the revaluation and correction of my own earlier positions in moral philosophy somewhat painful. Just too much had to be rethought. But I was not in the least worried about the so-called 'death of God'.

Nor was *After Virtue* a last ditch attempt "to claw back some semblance of moral truth" (this issue, 73) in modernity. I did not—and perhaps this reflects badly on me—ever have that much doubt about the stock of moral truths, truths that I had first learned from my parents and my aunts. What I was in doubt about, doubt to a significant extent resolved in the course of writing *After Virtue*, was how to give a justifiable philosophical account of those moral truths. And the history of how that doubt was resolved is misrepresented in Bavister-Gould's narrative. Let me focus on just two aspects of that narrative.

The first concerns the type of contrast that he draws between my treatment of tradition in *After Virtue* and earlier and that advanced in *Whose Justice?*

*Which Rationality?* and subsequently. So far as the earlier treatment is concerned, Bavister-Gould lays stress on my thesis that “activities which inform a tradition are always rationally underdetermined” (Knight, 1998: 67, quoted by Bavister-Gould, this issue, 65, footnote 10). And clearly I was at fault in not spelling out what I meant by this further, perhaps by making explicit my debts to both Michael Polanyi and Thomas Kuhn, but I had not supposed that I was saying anything controversial. In acting so as to carry any tradition further, say, the tradition of enquiry in the discipline of physics, there are no rules that guarantee success, there is, no way of giving sufficient reasons in advance for moving in this direction rather than that. All such justification is retrospective. It has turned out at each later stage that Newton or Maxwell or Bohr had indeed provided the resources needed for carrying the tasks of explanation one stage further. But, at the time they did their work, they were going beyond what could then be adequately justified. It is in this way that the activities that carry forward a tradition are rationally underdetermined. And as it is with scientific traditions, so is it too with philosophical traditions and even with social traditions. This is why Bavister-Gould is also mistaken in saying that the conception of tradition in *After Virtue* “is very different to the notion of a rationally constituted tradition of enquiry that MacIntyre develops in later work” (this issue, 65).

In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* I was reflecting upon what it was to which I had committed myself by taking up the points that I had laid out in *After Virtue*. And I realized that the concept of tradition to which I had appealed was more complex than I had acknowledged. What I had spoken of as the tradition of the virtues was at once a social tradition and a tradition of enquiry embedded in that social tradition. Philosophers who carried forward that tradition of enquiry articulated, reflected upon, enlarged, criticized, and sometimes revised the conception of the virtues embodied in the practices of everyday life and on occasion prescribed new reasons for the everyday thoughts and actions of those participating in the social tradition of which they themselves, their families, and their neighbors were a part. This is of course not the only kind of relationship in which a tradition of enquiry may stand to a social tradition. But I have perhaps said enough to clarify the relationship between *After Virtue* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

I turn now to issues concerning incommensurable goods and tragedy. Here again Bavister-Gould draws the wrong sort of contrast between *After Virtue* and my later work. He is right in asserting that my reading of Aquinas changed my view of practical dilemmas and also right in thinking that such a change must have implications for one’s view of the nature of tragic dilemmas, but he is mistaken in supposing that this change entailed a wholesale rejection of the position that I had taken in *After Virtue*. Consider the following five theses.

First, there are incommensurable goods, goods such that nothing about them *qua* good gives us reason to choose one over the other. Secondly, we have to learn to live with this fact and make decisions about what place, if any, particular goods of this kind should have in our lives. We can have good reasons for making such decisions, but those reasons will have to do with our own character, our situation, and what we take our long-term goods to be, not with the nature

of the incommensurable goods themselves. Thirdly, to be in a tragic situation is not just to be in a situation in which one has to choose between incommensurable goods, but in one in which, however one chooses, someone will be gravely wronged. Fourthly, the recurrent occurrence of such situations is a central and salient feature of human life. Fifthly, to find oneself in such a situation is always the result of some prior wrong choice, some imprudent, intemperate, rash or cowardly, or unjust choice. In Aquinas's terms no one is ever *perplexus simpliciter*.

To the first two of these theses I was committed in *After Virtue* and remain committed. The third, as Bavister-Gould acutely notes, is at variance with my claim in *After Virtue* that "tragic opposition and conflict is the conflict of good with good embodied [in an] encounter prior to and independent of any individual characteristics" (MacIntyre 2007, 163, quoted by Bavister-Gould, this issue, 71) which was accompanied by a claim that Aristotle had misread Sophocles. In both claims I was mistaken and I am grateful to Bavister-Gould for putting this mistake on record. But my own correction of this mistake I owed to a rereading of Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Aristotle, not Aquinas. The inescapability of choice between incommensurable goods is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for someone's situation to be tragic. And it was foolish of me to think otherwise. Note however that the fourth thesis does not entail the fifth and that it was the fifth of whose truth I was persuaded by Aquinas. So my views on tragedy gradually developed and there was no sharp discontinuity of the kind that Bavister-Gould portrays in his over-dramatic narrative. Most importantly my change of mind on these two issues from *After Virtue* to its successors was compatible with my reiteration of the central theses of *After Virtue*.

## IX

I turn now to four essays to each of which my response is simply a grateful and enthusiastic 'Yes', although for very different reasons. Ron Beadle has once again put me in his debt by his clarification of the notion of a practice, as I have used it, and his refutation of Geoff Moore's defense of contemporary managers and Moore's unfortunate attempt to show that business is a practice. Kelvin Knight, who has done so much more to situate my thought historically, and to relate it to the philosophical and political thought of others, not only than I have ever done, but than I would ever have been able to do, has now clarified for me as well as for my readers some of the ways in which a comparison with Heidegger and with Arendt can be illuminating. And Christopher Lutz has insightfully spelled out some aspects of the historical narrative presupposed by and gestured at in *After Virtue*. Of Beadle, Lutz, and Knight it can safely be said that they understand my work at least as well and sometimes better than I do. If everything in my work about which they have written were to be lost and was known only through their expositions, it might well improve my reputation.

Carey Seal's essay is of a different kind, a discussion of the relationship of my conception of the Athenian *polis* to the ways in which I have been influenced by Aristotle's politics, an essay whose interest is such that readers interested in

the *polis* and in politics, who have never read my work and are never going to read it, could profit greatly from it. Seal recognizes how much my reflections on ancient Greece were and are influenced by Moses Finley and enquires how far they are vulnerable to Malcolm Schofield's critique of Finley. In the light of that critique Hesiod is given his due place in the story and what emerges with admirable clarity is a narrative that is notably superior to the one that I supplied, in respect both of historical scholarship and of relevance to moral and political issues. Of Seal's essay I can only say: I wish that I had written it.

Finally I come to Piotr Machura's searching reflections. I put on one side much in his essay that I would like to discuss and turn directly to his conclusions about my view of the place of philosophy in human life, in order to distinguish what is correct from what is misleading. Machura ascribes to me the view that philosophy "must be rooted in the everyday routine of the community to the degree that not only academic philosophers are the subject of moral discourse", asserting that my goal is to remake the culture so that every individual "will be aware of the necessity of intellectual activity in their life" (this issue, 136). The philosopher is to become for this remade culture a *character* in the sense in which I used that word in *After Virtue*. "As a *character* the Philosopher should be taken as a 'measure' of communal life. But as such they are also a role model for 'professional' philosophers." (this issue, 136)

Philosophy is an independent mode of enquiry, but the questions that it asks are such that, in order to deal with them adequately, it has to call on resources afforded by other disciplines: on the narratives of historians, on the empirical data and the theories of physicists, on the interpretative and explanatory reports of anthropologists and sociologists, and so on. At some stages in the history of philosophy the acknowledgement of this interdependence of philosophy and what were later to become other disciplines has been unproblematic: for Plato and Aristotle, for Aquinas, for Descartes and Leibniz, for Marx. But for much postKantian philosophy and especially for much, although not all contemporary analytic philosophy it has been quite otherwise. The forms taken by late twentieth century academic professionalization and specialization have resulted in a damaging narrowness of mind. And as a counterpart to this there is a stereotype in the general culture, whereby "philosophy" is understood to be the name of a highly specialized discipline that can have little or no relevance to anyone who is neither a professional philosopher nor an undergraduate student.

What this stereotype prevents is any widespread recognition that from time to time in the situations of everyday life it is impossible to become adequately reflective without opening up philosophical questions, and this for two different kinds of reason. On the one hand we sometimes find ourselves first asking about some familiar and habitual activity 'Do I really have good enough reasons for going on doing *this*?' and then having to ask "What would count as a good reason for engaging in this kind of activity and why?", or someone else perhaps questions a belief that we have so far taken for granted and we are forced unexpectedly to reflect on what the standards of truth and falsity are in this particular area and why truth matters. So, without having intended to, we begin to engage in philosophical enquiry.

On the other hand there are those existential questions that arise in every life in every culture at certain times, questions about the significance of death, about what it is to live well or badly, about how we should confront pain and suffering, about what we owe to whom. Often religious answers have been given to these questions and subsequently antireligious answers, and how to evaluate those answers, how indeed to formulate and reformulate the questions, has been a central task for philosophy from Plato to Nietzsche. But in the presently dominant culture, whatever our standpoint, we are apt to ignore philosophy and to remain unreflective, making this a culture of answers, not of questions. And this is in part at least due to the gap between present day academic philosophy and everyday life. Both Thomists and Marxists have recognized the unfortunate nature of this gap and tried to overcome it, but we are still a long way from succeeding in doing so. This is why I would be unhappy if someone inferred from Machura's characterization of my views that I claim to know how to achieve this. Philosophy has yet to find anything like its due place in our common life.

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