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## Civilizing Practices

**Abstract:** MacIntyre's contrast between contemporary individualist versions of morality, expressive of arbitrary selfwill, and some less willful or less arbitrary moral guidance, is queried. All social practices, both those MacIntyre disapproves of and those he prefers, are claimed to contain elements of arbitrariness, and some scope for the expression of some individual human wills. MacIntyre's neglect of the question of what allocation of power a particular practice or set of practices involves is contrasted with Hume's due but not undue attention to this matter. MacIntyre's treatment of Hume's place in the history of the Aristotelian conception of the moral life as cultivation of virtues is criticized and tentatively explained as really due not to Hume's anti-rationalism, but to his acceptance of the political and commercial practices which MacIntyre distrusts, and to his rejection of the non-Aristotelian religious concepts of other-worldly goods, sin and redemption from it, which MacIntyre wants added on to Aristotle's moral theory.

MacIntyre's diagnosis of where we stand, as far as morality goes, emphasizes the "arbitrary selfwill" behind the contemporary "masks of morality". His story of how we got to this state is a story of loss of faith in a shared morality, in guidance by what presumably was either not will at all, or some less arbitrary and more rational and invariant "will", that of a tradition which nurtured those practices into which individual persons were initiated, so that they could combine participation in them into meaningful life-histories. The larger continuing narrative of a cultural and religious tradition sustained the individual life narratives of those who learned those practices, cultivated the virtues needed for success within them, and for that interweaving of them which went into the composition of significant lives. The real disaster was the Enlightenment, when the ties that bind were unravelled by impious and curious thinkers like Diderot and Hume. Once those ties were unified and unravelled, attempts to reconstitute and retie them were unsuccessful, and so we have MacIntyre's scenario for modernity -- a sequence of "unmaskings" of the nature of those ties, and of breakings loose, by protest, from their steadily weakening hold.

Presuming that MacIntyre is in agreement with most of these modern unmaskers, that the moral malaise he finds is the lack of any guide except arbitrary self will, rather than the determination to unmask, to find nothing but arbitrary self will, I want to raise the question of whether such unmasking might have gone on earlier, before those older traditions with which MacIntyre has more sympathy had to struggle against these forces of modernity to survive -- where what I mean is not whether it was historically feasible that unmaskers should appear, but rather whether there was anything to unmask, whether the morality of Jane Austen's Southern counties, or of Anglo Saxon Becket and Norman Henry, or of the Benedictine order, or the Greek polis or the Homeric heroes, was a mask for some arbitrary will. Did wills only become arbitrary once traditions were broken, or did morality in those uncorrupted times not serve any will? Is it that the uncorrupt morality is not expressive of will, or is it that the will it expresses is non-arbitrary, so that no "mask" is needed?

MacIntyre's version of moral virtues and the good life in Homeric times, in Athens, in the England of Jane Austen's heroines, does successfully veil the power relationships constitutive of those social worlds. The concept of power plays no important role in his analysis - even the shrill modern self-assertive arbitrary wills are seen as mostly impotent, or are counted on to cancel out one another's power. When MacIntyre discusses the conflict between Henry II and Becket, that is of course seen as a conflict between secular power and the church's power. Their confrontation is meaningful, Becket's martyrdom and Henry's penance have point, because "each had to recognize in the other not just an individual will, but an individual who was the bearer of an authoritative role" (AV 161).<sup>1</sup> They "inhabit a single narrative structure", whereas clashing modern wills inhabit none except self-invented alienating narrative structures (if this is not a contradiction in terms for MacIntyre). Now granted that Becket and Henry each occupied time-honoured roles which carried authority, how does that fact make their wills, as occupants of those roles, non-arbitrary? The evolution of the role of archbishop, and of English monarch, if not exactly "arbitrary", was as dependent on historical "accident", and as dependent on perceived group interest, as any modern person's will is dependent on accidents of subjective taste, luck, and on perceived self interest. Do our wills cease to be arbitrary when they serve some larger purpose than our own good? Is Becket's will to oppose Henry nonarbitrary since done for the church he heads, for an institution which preceded his leadership of it and will survive his martyrdom? But if our wills cease to be arbitrary simply by our joining in collectives which last longer than any of their members do, it is easy enough for us moderns and postmoderns to have nonarbitrary wills. All we need is a 'cause' in which to unite our will with that of others. Palestinian guerilla groups, rebels in Central America, members of the armed forces supporting those in power there, all have such collective causes, all are initiated into practices and share narrative

structures and may indeed see themselves as living unified lives and dying meaningful deaths.

If the recipe for a life which escapes moral corruption is simply to occupy some time-honoured role which requires one to do things one had to be taught to do, and to show qualities of character one had to cultivate, and to live out a whole life which exhibits some consistency of purpose, in a "narrative structure" one shares with others, then even university teachers in contemporary America and Europe qualify as MacIntyrean heroes and heroines. Each of us had to learn our trade, had to learn some often against-the-grain functional virtues like punctuality and enough self discipline to get our classes prepared and our exams graded on time. Our petty ambitions are mutually comprehensible - reading obituaries in the proceedings of our professional societies we recognize the familiar narrative structure of our deceased colleagues' lives - the tenure hurdle, the first book, the entry in the index of citations, the election or appointment to office in the professional association. We teachers each occupy a time-honoured position carrying with it a little classroom authority. Perhaps MacIntyre does see present day universities as communities which continue older traditions of authority and civility in ages of darkness and barbarism, as vestiges of a more civilized past, but I could give a parallel sort of description of the life of my bank-manager neighbour, or my businessman neighbour. They all occupy roles and are not the first to occupy them, they all exercise some role-associated authority and must accept the role-associated authority of others in their sphere, they all do things they had to be taught to do, and show qualities of character which took some cultivating. Their lives show more or less familiar and typical developments over time, a rough unity of purpose or unified progression of purposes, about as much integrity as Henry's or Becket's, and they all share "narrative structures" with a least some fellows and colleagues, some who understand what they are doing and why, who can recognize successes and failures in their lives, know what counts for them as tragedy, what as happiness.

But according to MacIntyre we would be deluding ourselves, my neighbours and I, if we thought that our lives met his demands for moral integrity. For our values are masks for arbitrary wills, even when the values are tied to roles which we did not invent. MacIntyre is willing to accuse the bank manager of the sin of usury, the businessman of greed, perhaps also the academic of a version of vain self seeking, those of us who campaign for the better recognition of the rights of minorities, or of children, or the aged, as shrill shouters of meaningless slogans. The debate over nuclear disarmament must be just another clash of arbitrary wills. Why? What is there about the American president's assertion of executive privilege, the American Congress' efforts to protect the powers of congress, the disputes concerning the implications of the first amend-

ment, which doom them to be different from and less meaningful than Henry's and Becket's struggles?

Now of course we experience more of the effects of consciousness of cultural diversity than did, say, Jane Austen's heroines. We do not all share the same narrative structure, since some of us are Catholics, others Protestants of various sorts, others Muslims, others Buddhists, others atheists, and this variety of religious and cultural life, which has always existed to some degree, is something we are conscious of in a way past people could sometimes avoid. The cultural mix in many modern nations, ease of travel, and the access we have to televised versions of the way others live, make each of us necessarily aware that our practices are not the only ones, our lists of virtues (if we have them) not the only ones, our institutional roles only one of many possible sets of institutional roles, our sort of narrative structure one among many alternatives. This doubtless does produce in some of us the emotivist reaction - we see each of the alternatives as equally arbitrary, and so all of them lose their authority, their meaning-conferring power. But I venture to say that, among reflective people, at any rate among philosophers, there are more traditionalists today than there are emotivists, more conservatives than radical sceptics. The reaction to awareness of cultural diversity need not to be the urge to demote all the diverse variants to the status of so many expressions of arbitrary wills. On the contrary, one can not only enjoy the variety of forms of life to which one can be no more than an appreciative onlooker (as I am to Maori hakas, American Thanksgivings, and to Corpus Christi processions in Austrian villages) but one's participation as insider rather than onlooker in those forms into which one has been duly initiated can be enhanced rather than devalued by awareness that they are only one set of many such sets of life-structuring forms.

I do not think MacIntyre wants to deny this. His reason for claiming that all we have today are moral masks, no longer even succeeding in hiding the arbitrary will behind them, is not the known plurality of alternative such "masks" or postures, but the claimed fact that it is self-will, and emotions not reason, behind the masks. MacIntyre's whole diagnosis seems informed at the deepest level by a distrust of human will, by a demand that human feelings be disciplined, overruled by some "reason" or some "nonself". Other selves like our own are not enough - that merely makes the arbitrary will an equally arbitrary collective will. Some discipliner or denier of human feeling-guided will is what seems required to save us from what MacIntyre calls arbitrary self will.

But what can and usually does discipline and curb human wills is, of course, a more powerful human will, not anything non-human. Typically such power wielders do claim to articulate the voice of "reason", sometimes of a divine reason. When the power to bend other wills derives from some

office the power-wielder occupies, some throne or archbishop's seat, it is that much the more secure, and the authority of tradition backs up the power which is wielded. Why should the decrees of such institutional powers express non-arbitrary decisions and policies? May not the disciplining of human passions and wills serve wills as "arbitrary" as those they suppress?

Where there is an institution, there usually is some inbuilt constraint on how the occupier of a powerful office wields that power. Popes are tied by the infallibility of their predecessors, judges constrained by precedent, constitutional monarchs and presidents by the constitution which both gives them their authority and defines its limits. So there may be a sense in which any wielder of the power that goes with a traditional office expresses a will which is dependable in some respects, is to some degree non-arbitrary in that there are limits to the free discretion such a powerful office-holder exercises. One thing a tradition does is define the limits of the power of the offices integral to that particular cultural tradition. Omnipotent wills are not bound by the rules of any practice, nor by the constraints of any tradition. But those traditions which have created and sustained positions of authority for those licensed to speak for or on behalf of omnipotent wills, be they the positions of king, pope, or simply father, have enabled some humans, with the ordinary array of passions and ambitions, to have very great power over others. Unless there is something non-arbitrary in these traditions themselves, and in the institutions they sustain, then the wills these powerful office-holders execute are essentially just as arbitrary as those of contemporary individualists. That the arbitrariness is institutionalized and continuing makes it no more ultimately acceptable and no less in need of moral masks, and no less ready to employ them to retain power and privilege.

If there is to be a distinction drawn between arbitrary wills and non-arbitrary wills, if we may so speak, it had better be more than simply the distinction between those who do not and those who do occupy positions of some authority in some tradition-hallowed power structure. As Rawls has emphasized, it is the basic structures of a society, and the roles they define, which are the most important sources of injustice, and of arbitrary tyranny.

Does the arbitrary contrast with the just, for MacIntyre? His concept of justice as a virtue is meritarian. To be dealt with justly is to get what one deserves, in the light of one's "contribution to the common tasks of that community in pursuing shared goods" (AV 233). If my community's practices are of a military type, the shared goods those of military glory, and my contribution to these is small, then I will deserve little from my fellows. Beggars contributed to the medieval Christian version of a shared good, their begging was part of the total common task, the glorification of

God, but they apparently deserved little, in material terms, for their contribution. To ask the Rawls question "Is it fair to allocate some people to the role of beggar, of untouchable, of non-property owner, of slave, and to judge their desert in terms of the sort of contribution such roles allow?" is to ask the sort of question about fundamental social structure, about the basic terms of cooperation, which MacIntyre's version of morality seems almost designed to block. Unless there is consensus in accepting some such structure which defines the roles of those who engage in the different practices, which gives some the right to determine the places of others, some the right to initiate others into their station and its meaningful duties, there cannot be that sense of shared values which is the prerequisite for the sort of narrative structure needed for unified lives and the cultivation of the virtues. A discreet veil is drawn, in MacIntyre's account of our moral decline, over the power-relations which obtained in those noncorrupt communities he cites. He is more willing to raise the question "to whom does power accrue?" of modern societies - the manager and the therapist profit from our moral malaise, get power over us. But what of the old style managers and therapists, what of kings, popes, and priests? What gave them their power may have been what MacIntyre sees as the moral health rather than the moral malaise of those over whom they exercised power, but the fact of privilege and superior power remains. MacIntyre is better at pointing out whose will lay behind the masks of Hume's version of morality (a Hanoverian elite) and behind post Humean versions, than at showing whose privilege was sustained by those versions of morality Hume challenged.

Why does MacIntyre give the unsympathetic portrayal he does to Hume's moral philosophy, which in an earlier article<sup>2</sup> he had seen as falling within that approved Aristotelian tradition which sees the moral life as the cultivation of virtues, rather than as obedience to a moral law? Hume also emphasizes the need for shared mutually agreed customs, and his concept of a social artifice can be seen as an ancestor of MacIntyre's (or Wittgenstein's) concept of a practice, a form of life with its own standards and internal goods,<sup>3</sup> an activity which one can learn only by being taught by those already initiated into it. Indeed Hume's essay "Of the Standard of Taste" seems to articulate the need for just this sort of expert authority, by one practised in the art, and 'delicate' in the discriminations relevant there. Hume's essays "Of the Delicacy of Taste and Passion", "Of Eloquence", "The Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" and "Of Refinement in the Arts" all explore the practices whose internal goods Hume himself valued most, the practices of literature, fine speech, 'the republic of letters'. Such learned and taught activities, which generate their own standards of excellence and their own goods, seem to count as practices in MacIntyre's sense, and Hume does not underestimate their complexity, nor reduce them to efficient ways of getting some practice-neutral pleasure. But Hume of course analyzed (and accepted) not merely

the cultural practices of the republic of letters, but also practices concerned with other kinds of publicly recognized goods, namely wealth and political power, and it is here, I think, that he offends MacIntyre, since it is here, supposedly,<sup>4</sup> that he justifies the preferences of a Hanoverian elite.

Hume finds virtue in obedience to the constitutive rules of some moral artifices, like contract, which are essential to capitalism, and to that "bureaucratic individualism" in politics which MacIntyre finds so pernicious. It is Hume's essays on commerce, money, interest, trade, taxes, public credit, his account of justice as obedience to property rules and fidelity to promises, which seem to condemn Hume to MacIntyre's disapproval. All the practices which, on Hume's account, take the natural passion of avidity and transform it by giving it an "oblique direction"<sup>5</sup>, first by inventing property rights which fix possession, then by inventing progressive new forms which property and its transfer may take, are practices essential to that modern world from which MacIntyre advises us to retire. They do provide a narrative structure within which a businessman or a politician may find an entire life's activity, with a typical unity, but they are also practices which enable the rest of us, whatever other practices we engage in, communal or more solitary, to adjust our individual and group activities to one another's - to buy and sell, to elect governments. These cultural artifices are those of Hegel's "civil society", they make possible minimal cooperation between strangers, and MacIntyre seems to prefer the closeness of ethical life to the cold distanced dealings of civil society. But must we choose? Some of our dealings must be with strangers, with members of other groups, practitioners of practices alien to us. Nor need we expect to find the whole meaning of our lives in these commercial and political practices, in order to appreciate the role they play, and the extent to which our own particular preferred richer practices are parasitic on those economic and political ones, dependent on them for any chance of peaceful survival. Hume does try to see the relation between economic and commercial activities and other human activities - in "The Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences", and in the various appendices in his History of England, he explores the historical interconnexions between different forms of legal, religious, political, economic, technological, craftsmen's and artists' and game-playing practices, and the virtues displayed in them. In all of this, he seems to me to be doing just what MacIntyre thinks one should do, in order to reflect on the moral possibilities for human beings. But he is also doing something which the earlier more Marxist MacIntyre would have approved of - giving attention to the economic bases of various more refined cultural forms of life, and attending to the power relationships perpetuated by particular ways of life.

I have suggested that one reason why MacIntyre gives Hume the role of villain in his narrative, despite the large extent to which Hume's position in moral philosophy resembles MacIntyre's, is Hume's 'liberalism', his acceptance of commercial and financial practices of which MacIntyre is suspicious. Another reason may be Hume's rejection of many of the practices which MacIntyre admires, those religious practices whose internal goods have essential other-worldly connections. MacIntyre's version of the history of ethics, in this book, is striking for its muting of the question of whether the moral life must also be a religious life. Hume's place in the history of ethics is, most obviously, that of firm rejecter of Christian ethics. He rescues the Aristotelian virtue of pride from its Christian status as first deadly sin, and puts it back among the virtues. He tries to provide an entirely secular account of the virtues, and the practices they enable us to engage in. Although MacIntyre does not condemn secularism, as such, in this book, he is insistent on the need to graft the Christian concepts of sin and of redemption on to the Aristotelian account of the moral life. Hume's role in the book becomes more comprehensible if we see his rejection of these concepts as what really damns him in MacIntyre's eyes.

Hume is no doubt wrong when he says that "celibacy, fasting, penance, mortification, self-denial, humility, silence, solitude, and the whole train of monkish virtues -; for what reason are they everywhere rejected by men of sense, but because they serve to no manner of purpose" (*Enquiries* 270). As MacIntyre points out, the purposes of certain sorts of Christian are served by such virtues - they are needed for the kind of practices and other worldly narrative structure to which, say, Becket devoted himself once he became archbishop. On being made archbishop, Hume writes that Becket "totally altered his demeanor and conduct, and endeavoured to retrieve the character of sanctity of which his former busy and ostentatious course of life might, in the eyes of the people, have bereaved him. Without consulting the king, he immediately returned into his hands the commission of chancellor; pretending that he must henceforth detach himself from secular affairs, and be solely employed in the exercise of his sacred function, but in reality, that he might break off all connexions with Henry and apprise him that Becket, as primate of England, was now become an entirely new personage. He maintained, in his retinue and attendants alone, his ancient pomp and lustre, which was useful to strike the vulgar. In his own person he affected great austerity and most rigid mortification, which, he was sensible, would have an equal or greater tendency to the same end. He wore sackcloth next to his skin, which, by his affected care to conceal it, was necessarily the more remarked by the world. He changed it so seldom that it was filled with vermin." (*History*, Ch. VIII) A Christian like Becket will see his life on the assumption that, in MacIntyre's words, "whatever earthly community I may belong to I am also held to belong to a heavenly eternal community in which I have a

role, a community represented on earth by the church" (AV 161). Hume's estimate of Becket's character, and of the narrative structure within which his life and death achieved their unity and meaning, is this: "This was the tragic end of Thomas Becket, a prelate of the most lofty, intrepid and inflexible spirit, who was able to cover, to the world and probably to himself, the enterprises of pride and ambition under the disguise of sanctity and of zeal for the interests of piety and religion: an extraordinary person, surely, had he been allowed to remain in his first station, and had directed the vehemence of his character to the support of law and justice; instead of being engaged, by the prejudices of the times, to sacrifice all private duties and public connexions to ties which he imagined, or represented as superior to every civil and political consideration. But no man, who enters into the genius of that age, can reasonably doubt of this prelate's sincerity. The spirit of superstition was so prevalent, that it infallibly caught every careless reasoner, much more every one whose interest and honour and ambition were engaged to support it ... The spirit of revenge, violence and ambition which accompanied their (prelates') conduct, instead of forming a presumption of hypocrisy, are the surest pledges of their sincere attachment to a cause which so much flattered these domineering passions." (History, Ch. VIII) These passions and this otherworldly Christian quest are of course ones with which Hume was well acquainted, at least in their Calvinist version, and he is not so much ignoring them, in what he says about celibacy, as deliberately setting himself against them. Men of sense, he says, have no truck with such purposes, which lead one to cultivate character traits which "cross these all desirable ends, stupify the understanding and harden the heart, obscure the fancy and sour the temper" (Enquiries, 270). This is a considered rejection of one set of virtues, the manner of purposes they serve, and the sort of people they produce.

It is not a rejection of an Aristotelian emphasis on character and virtues, rather than rules or laws. Indeed it should count, for MacIntyre, as one of those internal arguments and conflicts which sustain and advance a moral tradition - MacIntyre does not see the importation of otherworldly ends into the Aristotelian tradition as a break with that, and all Hume is doing, when he rejects the monastic virtues, is restoring the Aristotelian tradition to its original this-worldly values, removing from it the religious element which, by MacIntyre's own account, had occasioned some incoherence within that tradition, especially in its Thomist version. "What Christianity requires is a conception not merely of defects of character, or vices, but of breaches of divine law, or sins." (AV 157) The real trouble with the Enlightenment, for MacIntyre, is not that the Aristotelian conception of virtues and the practices they sustain are challenged, but that the concept of sin is challenged. Hume's ethics does indeed have virtually no place for anything like a Christian understanding of evil, or the Christian conception of a human will which may either sinfully consent to evil or, with the help of cultivated virtues, overcome such temptation. Hume even

dismisses the distinction between what is and is not voluntary on our part as a distinction of interest only to official punishers, and to moral philosophers who are "divines in disguise". He includes temperance, but not self denial, in his table of virtues. Aristotle's concept of weakness of the will gets transformed, in Hume, to the dominance of violent over calm passions, and he sees the determinants of that dominance to be largely situation, temperament and education, not feats of will by the individual. Despite this de-emphasis on the individual will (which at least guards him against any celebration of self will), his work in moral philosophy can properly be seen as an attempt to restore something like the original secular Aristotelian conception of the virtues, and to rid that tradition from the effects of the doctrine of original sin, and of divine law, which had been grafted upon it, in one of those many historical fusions of once incommensurable moral outlooks which occurred when the Greek and Hebrew conceptions of morality were joined by Aquinas. Just as the tradition Becket and Henry shared was one in which once clashing traditions of Briton and Roman, Saxon and Norman had reached some sort of mutual adjustment, had created a common measure, so the Christian Aristotelianism of someone like Aquinas or Butler had made peace between once warring traditions.

Hume's question about monks is precisely the question MacIntyre thinks it is important to ask. Not 'what rules they break or keep?', but 'what sort of people are they, what does this pursuit of other-worldly ends do to them?' His answer was unflattering and perhaps unfair. Whether or not the monkish virtues do harden the heart and sour the temper, at least this is a good Aristotelian way to approach the question of the wisdom of their way of life. Hume's evaluation of the moral effects of religious belief is not restricted to this judgment about the monkish character traits. In Part XII of the Dialogues he diagnoses the effects of "false religion" to be a "habit of dissimulation", a tendency to resort to "fraud and falsehood", to combine "the highest zeal in religion with the deepest hypocrisy", a "narrow contracted selfishness" in those understandably preoccupied by "so important and interest as eternal salvation", a manic-depressive alternation between excessive enthusiastic joy and "superstitious terror", not to mention the pernicious social consequences of "factions, civil wars, persecutions, subversion of governments, oppression, slavery" and of that "sacred zeal and rancour" which Hume saw to be the "most implacable of all human passions", the deadliest vice on his list. Its effects are familiar enough to us today, from Belfast to Beirut.

Another reason MacIntyre may have for excluding Hume from the tradition of moral reflection which he wishes to revitalize is the centrality, in his own account, of the concept of the unity of a life. Can the Hume whose Treatise worries over personal identity are so notorious have any place for such a notion, and for that of that "narrative structure" within which the unity is discerned? Well, even in the Treatise account Hume does offer us

the same sort of literary metaphor which MacIntyre wants, seeing the succession of perceptions as like the action on a theatre stage, where different actors "pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations". Dramatic unity is a sort of unity there can be in such a Humean person, one who has a "present concern for past and future pains and pleasures" (Treatise, 261) and whose history is likened to the history of a republic. Narrative and dramatic structure in lives and in nations becomes Hume's main concern, in the History of England.

MacIntyre chooses narration as the art from which to project the sort of structure he finds important for the explanation of human action, denying that this is a projection (AV 197). Probably one's preference for one metaphor rather than another here is itself determined by the sort of practices which structure one's life. Musicians may hope to see their lives as fugues, or free Nietzschean free spirits see theirs as a dance on the edge of the abyss, improvised variations on an emerging theme, while more sober historians will see the basic structure as that of narrative. MacIntyre's favourite genre among narratives is that of the story of a quest, and his version of the unity a life may have is that it is the unity of a quest. The attraction of this metaphor is undeniable, but one ought to remember all those other metaphors which have been used by Christians - life as a pilgrimage, as a straight race, as a good fight. One's choice among these varieties of metonymy will be an exercise not in arbitrary selfwill, but in self expression - which one seems best will indicate something about the content of one's life, about which practices seem most meaningful to one. Can we allow a thousand flowers of interpretation to bloom even within one tradition, or must we try to discriminate the correct metaphor, from among the metaphors used to describe the structure and the possible unity of a life? I would hope that we can afford to be tolerant here, that pluralism is compatible with mutual intelligibility. We can let MacIntyre describe life in terms taken from the literature of the Arthurian legends, and also let Hume describe his literary activities in metaphors taken from biological life. Life can have narrative structure, and books can be stillborn.

MacIntyre writes off Hume's evaluations as simply his Hanoverian prejudices, or his arbitrary selfwill, expressing itself, since, on Hume's own account, moral judgments, such as his own judgments on the pernicious effects of "religion as it has been commonly found in the world", are expressions of feeling, that complex feeling he called the moral sentiment. I cannot here go into the justice of MacIntyre's assessment of Hume's philosophical project of showing how human sentiment could, with reasoning from experience as its indispensable slave, correct itself, could overcome natural partiality and achieve a "more stable point of view". MacIntyre judges that this project failed, so that the historical path was cleared for

Kant, and his formalist version of the moral law. I do not agree with MacIntyre's estimate of Hume's philosophical success, but what I want here to emphasize is something about the project itself, whatever its success or failure. Hume raised the epistemological question of how we recognize moral virtues (and that is the main question, as he addresses it - not how we judge actions, or know moral laws, but how we recognize virtues). The answer he gave is complex. Virtues are those traits of character, involving both motivation and ability, to which we give approval, when we reflect upon them from a point of view which has overcome the "continual contradictions" to which more partial points of view are prone. The basis for this approval for character traits is their perceived contribution to character itself, and Hume's ultimate moral question is one about character: the good person is the one of whom the moral judge can say "his company is a satisfaction to me", the one who is "a safe companion, an easy friend, a gentle master, an agreeable husband, or an indulgent father" (Treatise, 606).

Now the epistemological question about the basis for our endorsement of some list of virtues or other moral desiderata is a typically modern question. One searches in vain in Aristotle for any clear answer to it. All we get there, in the end, is a reliance on one virtue on the list, phronesis, for generating the correct version of the other virtues which are to accompany it. (MacIntyre's answer to this question will presumably be given in his promised book on practical reason.) Hume's investigation was prompted by his reaction to the received epistemology, which gave one the choice between conscience, reason and revelation as the source of moral demands. Convinced that none of these were their real source, Hume set about analyzing conscience and "unmasking" both reason and revelation, to show what passions were served by their spokesmen. He was an unmasker, and not the first. (Think of Socrates, of Jesus against pharisees. Unmasking is no specifically modern calling.) It was precisely because of his confidence that he could discern what passions the received versions of moral reason were slaves to, that he saw his own positive task to be that of showing how violent passions could be calmed, how contradictory passions could correct themselves, with the help of some cooperative practices, to arrive at a stable shared point of view from which moral agreement might be reached, among men and women of sense.

Hume does anatomize our moral capacities, but surely a traditionalist need not be an obscurantist. Hume tries to bring into the light of reflective good sense both the virtues, the tradition and traditional practices in which they were nurtured, and the human capacities which make possible such virtue-recognition and such participation in shared practices. He resisted attempts to codify and generalize - his 'science' of human nature was the historian's science not the Weberian sociologist's. Unless the big mistake was to examine the virtues, and the epistemology of their recogni-

tion, then Hume's project seems to be one with which MacIntyre should have every sympathy. Is MacIntyre telling us that only the unexamined tradition is respectable, only those practices we have not analyzed or cannot analyze worth engaging in, only mystery-mongering conceptions of the human good, and of human virtues, able to generate the possibility of lives which seem to have point to those living them? I do not think so. His own moral philosophy tries to show us what a practice is, to make us self-conscious about practices, traditions, narrative structures, and virtues. In this sort of history-informed moral philosophy, which makes central the conception of a good person and his or her contribution to a correlative version of a good community with civilizing shared practices, Hume was MacIntyre's predecessor.

Their dispute, if there is one, is one internal to that non-Kantian, more Aristotelian tradition of reflection on morality. I think it concerns precisely the point where Christians disagree with Aristotle, namely whether a secular version of the human good, and of the practices and virtues enabling that good to be enjoyed, is better able to withstand the reflective survey it itself makes possible than are religious other-worldly variants in that tradition.

Hume was a thorn in flesh for the defenders of religion in his own day not just because of the case against religion he made patiently and thoroughly in all his writings, but because he so obviously in his own life achieved the sort of calm, and grace of spirit, which his opponents thought only supernatural powers, self denial, and floggings of the flesh could achieve. He managed to live, and live well, and live without any apparent sense of purposelessness, within the very secular practices and tradition he examined, cultivating the virtues he had analyzed. The "Enlightenment project", as carried out by Hume, did not fail within Hume's own life. He had no cause, either on his deathbed or earlier, to revise the main lines of his views about the human good. Maybe he was too optimistic about the ability of people in general to live without stupifying their minds, or indulging their love of the mysterious, or their fear of the unknown, their arrogance of power or resentment of powerlessness. But if these are the forces which defeat an enlightened Aristotelian secular tradition of civilizing shared practices and agreeable virtues, then the real enemies of Aristotelianism are neither Hume nor Marx nor Nietzsche, but St. Paul, and St. Augustine. The City of God is what subverted the Aristotelian earthly city, dissolved its ties and drained its practices of meaning. Hume tried to make something of the fragments of true Aristotelianism still alive in his culture, and did that realistically, helped by his acute perception of the realities of economic, social, religious and political power, as they had developed since Aristotle's day. In his life and his writings, he tried to show that a good life was still possible, and possible without splitting the human person into masochistic sinful desires demanding to be scourged,

and sadistic reason, or conscience, glad to oblige. Hume refuses to admire Becket's sackcloth, refuses to admire either Henry's kneeling to be whipped or those who whipped him.

He accuses the practitioners of religious practices both of hypocrisy and of a stupefaction of the understanding. These harsh words, which MacIntyre finds so unsuitable coming from the pen of one who believed that moral judgments have no authority except that of shared human sentiment - as if the religious have a monopoly on righteous indignation, as if one needs a pulpit to thunder from - might be translated into a calmer diction this way: that a certain resistance to full self-consciousness is built into the religious believer's attitude, that the practices of the religious, in as far as they are dependent on religious belief, do not bear what Hume called "reflexion", a turning of sentiment on sentiment, of reasoning on reasoning, of cultural practices upon cultural practices. Hume did want to unravel the ties that bind, to understand how they bound, to see what version of the human good they served, what kind of persons they turned out, and, to his credit, to see quite calmly, and even coldly, what relative allocation of power they entailed. He sees the power relations without, like Marx, becoming so preoccupied by them that nothing else can be seen. His analysis of female chastity, for example, does not blur the power relationships it perpetuates, nor the natural facts which make that asymmetry of power possible. In this particular case, his analysis of a practice, that of monogamous marriage with asymmetry of rights, had a certain recipe for change implicitly contained in it,<sup>6</sup> whereas his analysis of, say, inheritance of property by eldest child, does not. In general Hume seemed to have faith that we would still feel tied, once we understood the ties, that our form of life and catalogue of virtues would bear self survey, would not be degraded by being understood for what it was. And to understand what it is includes understanding who, on the form of life under examination, gives orders to whom, who profits most, who inherits Ninewells and who does not.

Part of Hume's confidence that, even when one has understood a particular moral order and 'balanced the account' as far as the gains and losses go, one will willingly conform to practices by which some profit more than others, in terms of power, riches, and honour (and not always through any moral 'desert' on their part), rests on his trust that the human good sense a decent culture will nurture will see that "inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of one's own conduct" are more important than "profit or pecuniary advantage"; that compared to "the invaluable enjoyment of a character", superior power and wealth are "worthless toys and gewgaws". The goods internal to the practice of the moral life become more important than any external goods. This should be unworldly and uncommercial enough, even for MacIntyre. But the more worldly side of Hume's acceptance of an inegalitarian set of social practices

was his resignation to the need for a certain degree of what might be called "arbitrariness" in human affairs, a limit to the scope of the virtue of equity. He emphasizes the fact that, in any stable scheme of property rights, or of rights to govern others, there will be "frivolous" factors deciding who gets how much of the social powers in question. Any attempt to allocate property or other powers by merit, or on an egalitarian basis, would fail to achieve the end of making possession or government stable, and would lead to the sort of discord and contention England experienced in the Seventeenth Century, when meritarians and Levellers tried to re-allocate rights according to their version of desert. If for some norm to be 'arbitrary' is for it to be such that it easily could have been different in detail, without that being better or worse, then both the artifices Hume analyzes and the practices MacIntyre analyzes are arbitrary, and inevitably arbitrary.

Was Hume over-optimistic, in thinking we might find forms of cooperation from which all benefit, despite their arbitrariness, and despite the manifest inequality of their distribution of material benefits and worldly power? Hume saw pretty clearly how human beings can react, emotionally, to their own perceived power or lack of power, and he helped us to get clear perceptions of the power relations in which we stand. For all MacIntyre's knowledge of Marx and Trotzky, and for all his reading of Nietzsche on the moral pathology of power-perception, he seems to lack, in his own positive account of morality, any appreciation of the various social, moral and emotional poisons which can flow from relationships between persons of unequal power, be they divine or human. Hume saw the dangers very clearly, and saw religion as increasing those dangers. If MacIntyre thinks Hume was wrong there, he owes it to us latter day Humeans to make it clear exactly where Hume went wrong. It is the details of Hume's case against religion which MacIntyre should attend to and rebut, if he wishes to continue to cast Hume in the role of serpent in the Aristotelian garden. For Hume attacked not Aristotelianism, but what he saw as the puritan religious perversion of Greek and Roman morality. Were a Humean historian to retell the narrative MacIntyre has given us, then the fall from Aristotelian grace, the original sin, would occur precisely with the doctrine of original sin.

Notes

- 1 References throughout to MacIntyre (1981) are given as AV followed by page number.
- 2 In MacIntyre (1971, 124), MacIntyre says "And the virtue of Hume's ethics, like that of Aristotle and unlike that of Kant, is that it seeks to preserve morality as something psychologically intelligible." In a later piece, MacIntyre (1982), he contrasts Hume's Aristotelian gearing of moral philosophy to moral psychology with the later Kantian spiritualization of the moral agent into a mere noumenal chooser. He disagrees with the version of reasons for action he finds in Hume, but it is a version which largely ignores that "correction of sentiment" Hume describes, the move from partial to moral point of view which occurs when "continual contradictions to our sentiments in society and conversation" cause us to be "loosened from our first station" and to "seek some other standard of merit which may not admit of so great variation" (Hume, *Treatise*, 583). I have begun to explore these Humean moves in Baier (1980), and in Baier (1982).
- 3 In Baier (1979a), I tried to show how the greater power, ability, and security which were the aims of the hypothetical natural persons who adopt the first Humean artifice, that of property, get transformed as new sorts of power, ability and security become possible. New goods and evils, new forms of trust and mistrust, good and bad reputation for new forms of trustworthiness, while at first valued only for their instrumentality in providing practice-independent goods, come, like the practices whose internal goods they are, to be valued for their own sake.
- 4 The Hanoverian elite did not receive Hume's *History* with the welcome one would expect, were MacIntyre right about Hume's ideological commitments. As Hume said, in *My Own Life*, "I was assailed by one cry of reproach, disapprobation, and even detestation; English, Scotch and Irish, Whig and Tory, churchman and sectary, free thinker and religionist, patriot and courtier, united in their rage against the man who had presumed to shed a generous tear for the fate of Charles I and the Earl of Stafford."
- 5 Hume (*Treatise*, 492, 497). Hume's account of justice, in the *Treatise*, is an account of how one particular passions, avidity or "the interested affection", restrains itself when mutually advantageous conventions are adopted. These artifices invent the so-called "laws of nature", and so give rise to "natural obligations". Sympathy with the public interest they create, and with rightholders whose rights they create, promotes these into "moral" obligations, on Hume's *Treatise* account. MacIntyre, both in AV 47 and in his introduction to *Hume's Ethical Writings* (MacIntyre 1965) charged that this account in the *Treatise* based justice on self interest, whereas in the *Enquiry* altruism and sympathy are also invoked. But Hume's *Treatise* account of justice as a moral virtue did invoke sympathy (*Treatise*, 499-500) and all that has changed in the *Enquiry* is the dropping of the hypothetical sequential account of how a natural obligation becomes a moral one.

- 6 See especially his essay "Of Moral Prejudices", which develops the hints in his Enquiry account of what powers to make resentment felt women possess, given that no individual has within himself "every faculty, requisite both for his own preservation and for the propagation of his kind" (Enquiries, 191). I have explored this in Baier (1979b).

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