

chaska protests, “when Jesus, now a socialist, had departed for Whitehall?” (96) This dismal eclipse of a sensitive, feminized world of homely service by a masculine fist of statecraft—a gendered reading of the process that adds much force and colour to the argument—is ultimately so consuming that you wonder what practical avenues for recovery remain.

This note of finality, however, points to one of the weaknesses of the book. While the discussion of the ways in which Victorian evangelicals moralized social problems is compelling, the contrast between such a spiritually active and personally responsive nineteenth-century world and the brave new world of twentieth-century statism is perhaps exaggerated. At a basic level it could be argued that Christianity has not been banished from those desolate corridors of Whitehall, or from school assemblies and hospital wards, to quite the degree argued. There are numerous Christians among those “mandarins of Whitehall” to which the book repeatedly refers. But a more significant challenge to the dichotomy of Christian Victorian era and “disenchanted” twentieth century is to argue that many of the social services that Prochaska sees as intrinsic to the churches actually presaged the secularization he blames on the state. There is plenty of evidence here of social responsibilities taking over from more decisively “religious” activities (in organizations such as the Mothers’ Union) and it was only in this respect that the rise of state welfare represented a challenge. Such organizations made themselves, to use a sociological phrase, “structurally vulnerable” by their all-out commitment to social work. This is not to argue that they were wrong to engage in such work, but to suggest that more theological perspective on the relationship between charity and evangelism, and between Christ and Caesar, is required by both practitioners and scholars of such work. There were dangers of secularization long before decisions were taken to “bow to the state.” This is an enjoyable and richly embroidered text, however, and one that will fire the contemporary as well as the historical imagination.

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Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics and Politics: Selected Essays, Volume 2*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xii + 239 pp. Pbk. £14.99/\$24.99. ISBN 0-52167-062-4.

All but one of these twelve essays have been published before, but Cambridge University Press is to be congratulated on bringing them together in a single volume as they significantly add to the thick description of MacIntyre’s project developed since *After Virtue*. How is that project best described? MacIntyre has tried to narrate the political and moral disintegration of western culture, locating the causes in two complex modalities: modernity and later, postmodernity. This book does not touch on the latter at all and MacIntyre has consistently argued that postmodernity is parasitic upon modernity, so this exclusion can be justified, but

his thin description of postmodernity requires supplementation. His narration started from an Aristotelian viewpoint, which could not sustain the weight placed upon it partly as it had no community of practice that might develop its vision and its vision required a community of practice. Hence, by the time of his *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (1988) we see MacIntyre drawing on Thomas Aquinas, who is read as an Aristotelian. This allowed MacIntyre to develop the narration from an embodied community of practice, coinciding with his conversion to Roman Catholicism. Chapter 8 of the current book nicely narrates MacIntyre's own development in terms of his relationship to Marxism from 1953 to 1995. Readers of *Political Theology* will thus be particularly interested in MacIntyre's project for it reflects the work of a distinguished Catholic philosopher, working as a philosopher, reflecting upon politics, philosophy and theology's role. And such readers will both be nourished and disappointed.

MacIntyre's book is divided into three parts. The first "Learning from Aristotle and Aquinas" is perhaps the richest from a theological viewpoint. The first two of the four chapters are on different variants of Aristotle, with MacIntyre defending his own reading against two major rival forms of Aristotle (Renaissance and modern versions); and the second two chapters are on Aquinas where Aquinas is pitted against two rival models of how politics and religion relate in terms of Aquinas's thinking about the natural law, and why conflicting world views do not in themselves upset Aquinas's observations regarding the universal nature of the natural law. These four chapters were not written as a cumulative argument, but in a deft sentence in the introduction MacIntyre makes them work in that fashion: "some Thomists have been anxious to stress the extent of what they take to be the philosophical as well as the theological differences between Aquinas and Aristotle. It is therefore important to make the case for understanding Aristotle in a way that accords with Aquinas's interpretation and in so doing it is necessary to distinguish and defend Aristotle so understood from a number of rival Aristotles" (vii). In my view in so much as these four essays succeed, part one of the book is a serious and much needed supplement to MacIntyre's overall project integrating and explicating his particular form of Aristotelian Thomism. However, the recent revival in reading Thomas as a theologian, not as a philosopher, poses questions that MacIntyre never addresses, for in so much as he seems to read Aquinas through the eyes of Aristotle, he fails to read him through the eyes of revelation and still leaves theologians standing on the touchline waiting for the ball to be passed by philosophy. In MacIntyre's take on natural law, when the ball is passed, it still belongs to philosophers and not theologians and, indeed, MacIntyre nicely argues that the most vulnerable and least helpful moments in Aquinas occur when he depends on canon law or theology for his arguments rather than on natural law (for example, in the duty of Christian rulers to punish heresy, on occasion by death, and for the exclusion of differing religious beliefs from the common good). However, it is precisely this exclusion that is ignored when MacIntyre defends Aquinas in chapter 4 in terms of his stipulation of the common good being served in the very presuppositions of the natural law. How can it in a religiously pluralist society, on

either Aquinas's or MacIntyre's terms? This needs careful unpacking. Only a revamped Aquinas (and a revamped Aristotle for that matter—a point eagerly conceded by MacIntyre) can serve contemporary Christian politics.

Part II "Ethics," contains some very appreciative essays on Mill and Kant on truthfulness and lies, and an essay that continues to explicate why Aquinas is still illuminating in assessing why moral dilemmas occur: because some prior action that generates the dilemma was itself a violation of some precept of the natural law. The essays on Mill and Kant weakens Stout's recent criticisms of MacIntyre in *Democracy and Tradition*. Here we find both a profound appreciation of two modern thinkers, even to the extent that Kant's prohibition against lying is extolled over Aquinas, even though MacIntyre better formulates Kant's strictures via Aquinas. Admittedly, MacIntyre limits his engagement to old favourites of his and it would be good to see an engagement with moderns from say the Romantic movement (Stout's challenge). Of Marxism, in a later chapter, MacIntyre rightly notes it is the only secular post-Enlightenment doctrine to have an equivalent scope to Christianity and that Christianity "needed and needs to learn certain truths from Marxism" (150). Stout's claim that MacIntyre fails to offer thick descriptions of modernity or show any appreciation of its many achievements is certainly diluted in the light of these essays.

Part III, "The Politics of Ethics," continues in the same vein, and two essays are particularly valuable. The first, on three rival versions of Marxism, all produced by MacIntyre at different stages in his thinking, is superb in showing why Marx actually formed the bridge to Aristotle, that formed the bridge to Aquinas, that formed the bridge to an eclectic MacIntyre, who instructively looks back at these crossings and cumulative learning. The second, through Yeats, shows how poetry can be political philosophy. It is a superb piece.

Critics of MacIntyre will find only some of their worries addressed (as above with Stout) and certain causes for worry only deepened (a failure to adequately distinguish Aquinas from Aristotle or widen his treatment of the complex differences within modernity). Admirers of MacIntyre like myself will find much that is new and some provocative historical contextualizations, but this admirer is left concerned at what seems a defence of natural law that has no proper relation to revelation because perhaps Aristotle still runs the philosopher part of Aquinas which seems overly detached from the theological.

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For anyone interested in the increasingly fractious topic of the EU and religion this volume of closely integrated essays is essential reading. I offer a thematic index of the three theoretical essays governing the book as a whole.