Towards a Historicist Thomism: MacIntyre's Tradition-Based Rationality and Its Criterion of Truth and Falsehood

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Abstract. This essay examines the development of MacIntyre's notion of tradition-based rationality and his attempt to be simultaneously a Thomist and a Historicist. It begins with exegesis of MacIntyre's writings that shows how there is an implicit understanding that temporal progression will resolve debates over truth claims. From there I demonstrate the potential problems that this poses if MacIntyre's account of tradition is to be an account of rationality as such. I develop an account of the central criterion of truth and falsity in MacIntyre's account of Tradition-Based Rationality. This criterion is an embodied, distended law of non-contradiction. I demonstrate that it is possible to develop this criterion in a Thomistic vein through exegesis of Aquinas's *Disputed Questions on Truth*. I conclude by offering examples of this criterion at work in MacIntyre's writings and some comments on its relevance for practical politics in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*.

I.

The two basic questions driving this investigation are: (1) How can MacIntyre's tradition-based rationality enable the development of more complex notions of truth? and (2) How can MacIntyre be both a Thomist and a Historicist while avoiding relativism? Answering those questions will require a re-examination of MacIntyre's extensive corpus. In answering those questions, however, I intend to show that MacIntyre has made an important contribution to historicist notions of rationality.

The place to begin is at the end of MacIntyre's three-stage account of the development of a tradition of enquiry. The first stage of enquiry is that prior to an epistemological crisis, in which practices, texts, and beliefs are held relatively uncritically by adherents of a tradition, or at least the questions posed by those adherents do not put the tradition itself into question. The second stage of tradition-based enquiry occurs when the tradition as a whole is put into question, engendering an epistemological crisis. Finally, in the third stage, a tradition has passed through an

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epistemological crisis where its beliefs prior to the epistemological crisis have undergone extensive reformulation. Here, MacIntyre outlines what is in effect the criterion of truth for tradition-based rationality, stating that 'Between those older beliefs and the world as they now understand it there is a radical discrepancy to be perceived'.[1] This 'lack of correspondence' between the picture of the world given by the tradition prior to the epistemological crisis and that picture given after the epistemological crisis leads to the earlier picture of the world being called false.[2] He asserts that this is the original form of the correspondence theory of truth, 'in which it is applied retrospectively in the form of a correspondence theory of falsity'.[3]

Note that in this account of tradition-based rationality, what distinguishes true from false is the passage of time. The production of incompatible pictures of the world *forces* the decision in favor of one being true and the other being false. Interestingly, however, one could adequately describe the process then in terms of 'earlier' and 'later', or, better yet, 'before' and 'after', substituting 'earlier' or 'before' for 'false' and 'later' or 'after' for 'true'. Therefore, while a discrepancy has emerged in the course of argument, what compels one to decide in favour of one picture or the other seems to be the proximity of that picture's emergence to where one is on the line of temporal progression. MacIntyre would here likely argue that this does not fully describe how one decides between two different pictures of the world given by different stages of the tradition. Rather, it is a matter of whether or not one of the pictures furnishes answers to the conundrums raised in the course of the epistemological crisis. Nevertheless, MacIntyre himself has admitted that it is often difficult to recognize genuine epistemological crises in the life of a tradition. Thus, it could and perhaps should always be an open question if the possible incoherencies diagnosed at the outset of what seems to be an epistemological crisis are actual incoherencies. Consequently, the question of what one might call MacIntyre's faith in the power of time to bring all things to light remains.

This issue has deep roots in MacIntyre's thought, dating back to 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science'.[4] There he develops an account of discrepancies across time

[1] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd, 1988), 356.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science' *The Monist* 60 (1977), 453-472.

markedly similar to the model that he gives in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. His conclusion in that article, that 'scientific reason turns out to be subordinate to, and intelligible only in terms of, historical reason', combined with his critique of Kuhn, clarifies the problem.[5] MacIntyre's critique of Kuhn turns on the latter's view that moving from scientific paradigm to another requires something akin to an evangelical conversion experience, which, for MacIntyre and others effectively negates the rationality of scientific development. Kuhn falls prey to this problem because, in his account of moving from one paradigm to another, he neglects to explain how the new scientific paradigm initially begins. MacIntyre maintains that what must have happened in such cases is that some of those educated into that first tradition must have recognized the 'gap between [the original tradition's] epistemological ideals and its actual practices'.[6] The scientific revolutionary, like Galileo, who is MacIntyre and Kuhn's example of the constituter of a new paradigm, then comes to conceive of not just a new way of understanding nature but of a new way of understanding the older science's understanding of nature. MacIntyre clarifies this point in a revealing passage:

> It is because only from the standpoint of the *new* science that the inadequacy of the *old* science be characterized that the *new* science is taken to be more adequate than the *old*. It is from the standpoint of the new science that the continuities of narrative history can be re-established.[7]

A similar dynamic is in play to the one that will be developed at length in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. Discrepancies that emerge in the course of time reveal older beliefs to be inadequate compared to newer beliefs. Once again this process could be re-described by replacing 'inadequate' with 'earlier' or 'before' and 'adequate' with 'later' or 'after'. Someone may contend that here MacIntyre is not discussing criteria of truth and falsity but rather the establishment of narrative continuity and that, while the two concepts are closely related, they are not reducible to one another. To make this distinction would, however, neglect the relationship between scientific and historical reason established by the argument currently under examination. Furthermore, even if the

[5] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Epistemological Crises', 465.
[6] *Ibid.*, 468.
[7] *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

establishment of narrative continuity is in question, that will simply push the problem back one step further. Establishing narrative continuity will require identifying markers, nodes, or poles within the narrative that can be used to understand its progression and development. Yet identifying such markers within a narrative, even a philosophical one, will raise the question of what counts as an acceptable marker. This is a question that must and will be answered later in this paper, but it has now become clear that greater clarity about the meaning of MacIntyre's terminology is needed.

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to unpack the terms 'scientific reason' and 'historical reason' introduced by MacIntyre in 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and Philosophy of Science'. Doing so will elucidate MacIntyre's implicit reliance on temporality. I contend that for MacIntyre, scientific reason can be distinguished by its concentration on a narrow, specific question or set of questions relating to a particular circumstance. It is pre-eminently concerned not with particulars, but with *a* particular. Moreover, scientific reason does not look backwards in time to the development of its own mode of enquiry or the perspective from which it conducts its investigation, nor does it try to relate its enquiry critically to the rest of the tradition of which it is a part. One interesting entailment of this view is that it does not apply only to the process of scientific experimentation, though experiments provide a good example of this kind of reasoning. An equally useful and equally appropriate example could be Descartes's act of doubting to reach the *Cogito* in the *Meditations*, since it is an explicitly atemporal act of enquiry that seeks to resolve a specific question. The inherent flaw in the Cartesian tradition then is that it seeks to use an act of scientific reasoning to do what requires the exercise of historical reason.[8]

Historical reason, by contrast, is explicitly concerned with temporality and temporal progression, principally because historical reason is roughly equivalent to narrative for MacIntyre. One exercises historical reason by telling or retelling a narrative while paying close attention to the context in which scientific reason takes place, how one came to reason scientifically about a given question, and how specific acts of scientific reasoning relate to one another. This kind of reasoning is required because of the contingent particularity of all situations. Therefore, MacIntyre's treatment of the debate surrounding Kuhn's work rests on two implicit moves. On the one hand, he accepts Kuhn's critique

[8] MacIntyre, 'Epistemological Crises', 461-463.

of Popper's idea that scientific experimentation is a constant process of revising the entire body of scientific knowledge. This he does not via appeal to Kuhn himself, though, but by noting that Descartes could never truly doubt everything. A set of background assumptions must always remain in place against which one can meaningfully raise doubts. On the other hand, MacIntyre's conception of historical reason as the meta-level process by which a science/tradition of enquiry critiques itself implicitly rejects Kuhn's notion of scientific tradition as wisdom received without reflection. What therefore has been shown here is that narrative continuity and criteria of *propositional* truth and falsehood are not two entirely separate entities, but rather two levels of rationality, one more narrative than the other. Thus, the process of discrepancies emerging between earlier and later pictures of reality is part of the deep structure of MacIntyre's thought, driving both his accounts of truth and falsity and his accounts of narrative continuity.

In 'Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science'; *After Virtue;* and *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* MacIntyre concentrates on the sociological and linguistic orders; the order of ontology does not receive detailed treatment. I contend, though, that concerns with ontology would inevitably arise, as they do in MacIntyre's later works. This is foreshadowed in his essay 'Colors, Cultures, and Practices'. [9] Commenting on Wittgenstein's Private-Language Argument, he notes that actual language users correct their judgements with reference both to standard objects and to reassuring interlocutors, and that these two resources are never used in isolation from one another:

> It is only because and insofar as we suppose that other members of our community have continued to use the same words of the same objects that we are able to appeal to their use to confirm or correct our own. And of course it is only because and insofar as we are assured that those objects have continued to possess the properties which make it correct to use those same words of them that we are able so to stand to appeal. In our normal procedures

[9] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'Colors, Cultures, and Practices', in *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, eds. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992) 1-23, 17.

> the appeal to reassuring interlocutors and the appeal to standard objects stand or fall together.[10]

In other words, the social and ontological orders are never independent of one another. Concern for one will inevitably involve the other. MacIntyre develops this insight later in the essay when reflecting on how developments in the practice of painting can force color vocabularies to develop. He notes that identity or near-identity between standards rooted in the large similarities of practice in different cultural orders and *traditions* furnish those practices with a 'certain real, if limited, independence of their own social and cultural order'.[11] Prior to making this statement he affirmed that the conception of practice with which he is working is that developed in *After Virtue*. What he either leaves unsaid or fails to note is the extent to which his account of the development of the practice of painting qualifies or corrects his account of practices and virtues given in *After Virtue*. In *After Virtue* MacIntyre had avoided the biological aspects of Aristotle's account of the virtues. He instead characterized his account as 'socially teleological'.[12] While MacIntyre had engaged with Wittgenstein throughout his early works, including *After Virtue*, the thinking on display in 'Colors, Cultures, and Practices' precludes an account of the virtues that is strictly social. Here he has explicitly acknowledged that the ontological order can put pressure on the social.

Cognizance of this aspect of his account of the virtues reveals the flaw in John Haldane's critique of MacIntyre. Haldane worries that MacIntyre, in trying to steer a middle course between the outright relativism of the Nietzschean genealogist and the overconfident universal rationality of the encyclopaedist, ultimately fails to sustain a conception of truth as 'tradition-transcendent, which is what metaphysical realism requires'.[13] Attention to his interpretation of Wittgenstein offers an effective response to Haldane's worry. Strikingly, MacIntyre reads Wittgenstein as a kind of realist, since he believes that a Wittgensteinian account of practices requires that they be granted a degree of transcultural independence. Thus, he is willing to grant that certain practices can come upon truths independent of the culture/tradition within which those

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[10] MacIntyre, 'Colors, Cultures, and Practices', 12-13.

[11] *Ibid.*, 24.

[12] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 197.

[13] John Haldane, 'MacIntyre's Thomist Revival: What's Next?' in *After MacIntyre: Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1994), 105.

practices are initially at home, as did Turner in his discovery of the multitude of shades of black in Japanese painting. This realism, however, is not an unqualified metaphysical realism Haldane seeks in his critique of MacIntyre. Turner could not and did not immediately see the variety of blacks utilized in Japanese painting. Rather, a process of training was required, whereby Turner was inducted into a set of practices analogous to those he had already mastered yet more extensive. Crucial to this process was the learning of new sets of names; in other words, an aspect of the social order revealed previously present yet previously hidden aspects of the order of ontology. Hence, MacIntyre has developed an account of metaphysical realism here that is compatible with Thomism yet tries to extricate its adherents from simply reverting back to fruitless debates between realists and idealists/non-realists.

Understanding why Haldane's worries about MacIntyre's metaphysical realism are unfounded also helps bring my own concerns into sharper focus. The worry should not be whether or not MacIntyre is guilty of relativism. Through this exegesis of Witttgenstein, MacIntyre has his own qualified version of realism. Rather, the worry is that MacIntyre's metaphysical realism derives its substance from aspects of reality, specifically temporal progression, that cannot provide the needed resources to sustain the full breadth of human rational activity. When MacIntyre does offer an account of how the virtues and practical rationality are grounded in metaphysical biology in *Dependent Rational Animals*, just such problematic criteria appear.

In *Dependent Rational Animals*, when discussing the links between human rationality and animal rationality, MacIntyre boldly opens his account with the statement, 'we do not need language to mark the most elementary distinction between truth and falsity'.[14] He then proceeds to describe a dog who has chased a squirrel into a tree. Standing at the base of the tree, Fido, MacIntyre argues, *believes* that the squirrel is in that tree. Then, suddenly, the dog darts from the base of the tree through the bushes and into the next yard. Scents received by his nose indicated that the squirrel had moved from the tree branches into the neighboring yard. MacIntyre maintains that there is an elementary *prelinguistic* distinction between truth and falsehood given to the animal by his sense perceptions. To use my description of this process outlined above, *earlier* in this narrative, the dog had a picture of the world in which the squirrel he was chasing resides in the tree. *Later*, however, a new picture emerged in which

[14] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago: Open Court Press, 1999), 36ff.

the squirrel was no longer in the tree. The earlier belief was deemed false by *new* sensory information. MacIntyre claims that human beings, as animals, must possess this criterion for truth and falsity. Then he goes further, asserting:

> When I call this distinction pre-linguistic, I do not mean that it has application in that stage of our lives when we have not yet learned to speak. Throughout our lives, after we have become able to distinguish true from false by a variety of means, we still continue to distinguish truth from falsity in this pre-linguistic way and, were we not able to do so, it is difficult to understand how we would be able to use the words 'true' and 'false' and their cognates as we do.[15]

At this point the previously implicit role that time plays in distinguishing true from false has become explicit, but here the implicit problems become explicit. At one point it certainly *was* true that the squirrel was in the tree. Why then does MacIntyre not acknowledge this? Time may make truths contingent, but that does not make them utterly false. Moreover, MacIntyre notes that we learn to ascribe truth and falsity in a variety of other ways. Can this basic, pre-linguistic notion of truth account for more complex notions of truth, such as mathematical truth? It is also worth noting the deeply embodied nature of this account of pre-linguistic truth. It effectively relies upon changes in sense perception. Similarly, then, is this notion of truth sufficient to undergird discussion of criteria of truth for non-embodied realities? These non-embodied realities can range from mathematical objects to angels, both of which seem to have some real existence for MacIntyre, but not an embodied existence. MacIntyre has rightly turned to ontological questions as his thought has progressed, but it is worth asking whether his ontological answers are sufficiently broad enough to accommodate the concerns of the tradition of which he himself is an adherent.

II.

One possible response that MacIntyre could make to this objection can be found in his essay, 'First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary

[15] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 36ff.

Philosophical Issues'.[16] Here MacIntyre has been responding to the problems modern analytic philosophers have faced in trying to establish epistemological first principles. The inherent underlying problem with such attempts is that they attempt to articulate first principles that both have immediate justifiable certitude and provide an ultimate warrant for all our claims to knowledge. Such first principles thus must be both immediately self-evident and have genuinely substantive content. The problem, however, is that a single principle cannot satisfy both criteria at once. Those which are immediately self-evident have no substantive content and those which have substantive content are not immediately self-evident. MacIntyre maintains that this conundrum does not exist for a Thomist, since Aquinas distinguishes between two different types of evident-ness. On the one hand, there are propositions that are evident to any competent language user, such as 'Every whole is greater than its part'. On the other hand, there are propositions that are evident only within a large-scale conceptual framework and to those who have a sufficient intellectual grasp of this conceptual framework.

MacIntyre could, therefore, possibly respond to the objection that I have raised about moving from an animalistic criterion of truth to more complex ones by referencing this distinction between two different kinds of evident-ness. In *Dependent Rational Animals* he noted that we go on to use other criteria for truth and falsehood beyond the basic animalistic criterion. Thus, one could argue that the animalistic criterion simply corresponds to the first kind of evident-ness and the more complex criteria of truth correspond to the second kind of evident-ness. This would seemingly allow for there to be two separate ways for distinguishing truth and falsehood, one deeply and explicitly rooted in our biology, the other related more specifically to theoretical enquiry.

The problem with this possible response is that Aquinas's distinction between two kinds of evident-ness is one more of degree than of kind. The first kind of evident-ness specifies that the proposition will be evident to any competent language user. Within this definition, what qualifies someone as competent and what counts as a language admit a range of meanings. One could specify the language of which one must be a user either as the ordinary language or as the grammar of Thomism. Thus, the competent user of ordinary language will not necessarily be a competent user of the grammar of Thomism. The competent user both

[16] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues', in *The Tasks of Philosophy: Selected Essays, Volume I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 146-154.

of ordinary language and of the grammar of Thomism may know both ordinary language and the grammar of Thomism, but merely be a competent user of the grammar of Thomism and not someone with a truly deep grasp of the entirety of the theoretical framework of Thomism.

A more powerful counter-objection comes from a closer analysis of the relationship between the two kinds of evident-ness. Again, the first kind of evident-ness are those whose terms 'are recognized by all', while the second kind are evident only to 'the wise, who understand the terms of the proposition which they signify'.[17] The latter kind of evident-ness depends on the former. Above I stated that one can be both a user of ordinary language and a participant in the discourse characteristic of a detailed theoretical framework. This point should in fact be reformulated to state that any participant in the discourse characteristic of a detailed theoretical framework *must* be a competent user of ordinary language. To be inducted into a detailed theoretical framework, one with its own grammar, some competent user(s) of that framework must introduce one to its basic concepts, its lexicon and syntax. For this to happen, the lexicon and syntax must be communicated to one in a comprehensible manner. Ordinarily this will take the form of teaching the detailed theoretical framework within and through the medium of ordinary language. If one uses ordinary language to communicate this theoretical framework then the grammar of ordinary language, its lexicon and syntax, must be compatible with the distinctive grammar of that framework. Consequently, any detailed theoretical framework depends on the broader field of ordinary language use, including those concepts of which one must have at least an implicit understanding if one is going to use ordinary language. Those concepts fundamental to the detailed theoretical framework may not be reducible to the fundamental concepts of ordinary language, but they must be at least compatible with and intelligible in terms of the fundamental concepts undergirding ordinary language. It is worth noting that MacIntyre himself acknowledges as much in his critique of Kuhn's account of 'conversions' during scientific revolutions.

One might critique these counter-objections by claiming that a category mistake has been made. Specifically, because in 'First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues' MacIntyre treats linguistically-constituted notions of truth, one cannot map the distinction between two types of evident-ness onto the divide between linguistic and pre-linguistic notions of truth. Such a critique would,

[17] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I-II, 94, a 2.

however, be establishing a firmer distinction between linguistic and pre-linguistic criteria of truth than MacIntyre himself in *Dependent Rational Animals.* He contends that were humans unable to distinguish true from false in this pre-linguistic way, we would likely be unable to understand how and why we use 'true', 'false', and their cognates as we do.[18] For MacIntyre, our linguistic criteria of truth are dependent on our pre-linguistic, animalistic criteria of truth. Thus, it would be a category mistake to attempt to separate the various accounts of truth criteria too sharply, for one would be creating overly distinct categories when that is precisely what MacIntyre wants to avoid. He cannot therefore simply treat his animalistic criterion of truth and falsity as separate from more complex criteria for truth and falsity. If we choose not to reject those elements of his thought explicitly affected by this issue, then we must argue that MacIntyre has in fact identified some kind of underlying unity between various criteria of truth and falsity. To articulate this underlying unity, we must turn to Aquinas.

In *Summa Theologiae* I.79, Aquinas argues that the practical and speculative intellect are not distinct powers, but are rather both functions of a unified intellect.[19] If this is the case, then we should in fact expect to find something like the similar criteria of truth and falsehood found in MacIntyre's accounts of various types of reasoning, which range from animalistic to tradition-based rationality. Therefore, we should identify more specifically what unifies MacIntyre's different accounts. Two further insights from Aquinas will aid in this endeavor. In question 79 Aquinas observes that the unity of the intellect is related to the ultimately unified nature of truth and goodness, which ultimately unite the ends sought by the practical and speculative intellects.[20] If this is the case, Aquinas argues, then the forms of reasoning are themselves analogous. Hence, the first principle of practical reasoning and the first principle of speculative reasoning can be analogously identified.[21] Instead of sharpening the divide between MacIntyre's animal rationality and the more complex forms of human rationality, such as tradition-based reasoning, the divide should be collapsed. There are not separate spheres of reasoning each with utterly distinct criteria of truth and falsehood, but an analogous chain of criteria of truth and falsehood.

[18] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 36.
[19] Aquinas, *ST* I, 79, a 11.
[20] *Ibid.*, I, 79, a 11, ad 2.
[21] *Ibid.*, I-II, 90, a 2.

Here I should respond to a possible Thomistic objection that might pose problems not only for my own interpretation and extension of MacIntyre's thought, but possibly for most or all accounts of MacIntyre's attempt to recover human animality in discussions of the virtues and practical reasoning. In *ST* I,78,4, Aquinas discusses the interior estimative power found in perfect animals that, in humans, takes the pre-intellectual form of what Thomas called 'the cogitative'. This is something shared between human beings and 'higher' animals. The unity of the practical and the speculative intellect is grounded in an intellectual power possessed, not by dogs or dolphins, but by humans exclusively. The unity, in humans, turns out to be the extrinsic influence of the intellect on the sensitive powers of the human animal, and not a unified object. For evidence of this distinction appearing in MacIntyre's thought, one could point to his engagement with Bernard Williams's critiques of Aristotle in *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*. Williams rejected the notion that rationality makes human beings distinct, noting that other human capacities, such as that of falling helplessly in love, seem just as distinctive. [22] In response MacIntyre argues that human affective capacities receive their distinctive shape precisely because humans can educate and reshape those affective capacities through reflection. Thus, the conclusion of this objection might go, the reflective capacity of human beings identified by MacIntyre flows from this cognitive capacity possessed only by humans, thereby requiring a distinctive criteria of truth and falsity.

While I accept the more detailed Thomistic anthropology, I do not think that this objection has much force. Humans may possess a cognitive capacity not possessed by animals and the unity of the human intellect may lie in 'immaterial reason', but I find no reason to think that locating unity in such a manner would deny, either for Thomas or for MacIntyre, the animality of human rationality. In *ST* 77,4 Aquinas notes that the powers of the soul might be understood as unified and dependent on one another in two ways. First, their unity and dependency on one or the other power might be understood according to nature, in which the higher, rational nature is first in priority. Second, they might be understood in terms of generation in time, in which case their dependency will rely on the vegetative powers of the soul. In *De Anima* Aristotle notes that, when understood according to the latter mode, 'for both in figures and in things which possess soul, the earlier type always exists potentially in that which

[22] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity: An Essay on Desire, Practical Reasoning, and Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 224-225.

follows … for without the nutritive faculty the sensitive faculty does not exist'.[23] The point is that the unity of the human intellect, even if it is unified by a cognitive capacity possessed only by humans, must include the animal rationality possessed by lower souls. The fact that the unity of human rational faculties is not rooted in a unified substance does not alter the fact that some performative unity must remain. The best picture of the soul is the body, as Wittgenstein noted.[24] The argument turns on there being an analogously unified chain of rational operations, many of which must still be grounded, on my interpretation of MacIntyre, in metaphysical biology.

If, however, this relationship is analogous, then there must be something common between the different terms of the analogy. As I noted in my exegesis of MacIntyre's writings, this appears to be a discrepancy across time, which establishes the truth or falsity of a judgement, proposition, or holistic picture of the world. An initial objection here might be that, while I have shown that MacIntyre has a Thomistic basis for identifying a unified, if analogous, set of criteria of truth, the criteria that he has delineated still does not account for how the more complex versions of truth arise from the animalistic criterion of truth. How then does one move from a dog discarding one notion of where a certain squirrel is located for another to Wiles's solution to Fermat's Last Theorem?

Due to the ultimate unity of the true and the good, and the unity of the intellect, one can assert an analogous relationship between the first principle of practical reason, to seek the good and shun evil, and the law of non-contradiction in logic, that contradictory statements cannot simultaneously be true. What I propose then, is that we should understand the unifying mechanism of MacIntyre's various criteria of truth as analogous forms of the law of non-contradiction. The animalistic criterion of truth and those criteria similar to it should be understood as *embodied, distended* forms of the law of non-contradiction. The first principle of practical reason itself can be interpreted as a form of the law of non-contradiction, considering that one cannot both seek the good and seek evil simultaneously. Before rereading MacIntyre's work in light of this contention, it is necessary first to examine Aristotle's formulation of the law of non-contradiction, MacIntyre's account of how *principium* functions in Aquinas, and D'Andrea's response to worries about how

[23] Aristotle, *De Anima*, II. 3, 414b14-17.

[24] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), *PPF* IV §26.

MacIntyre's historicism is compatible with his Thomism. The first two tasks will provide warrants for interpreting MacIntyre this way, while the third task will clarify what is different about my solution to this issue.

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle offers three separate versions of the Law of Non-Contradiction. At the outset of his discussion of the matter, he notes that the axioms of logic, mathematics, and substance pertain to one science, that of the philosopher.[25] This is because they are the axioms of being *qua* being. Thus, these most basic axioms should hold true for both the physical and the non-physical (e.g. numbers), for both the practical and the speculative. Aristotle offers three versions of the law of non-contradiction: the ontological, the psychological, and the logical.[26] The ontological version states that it is impossible for the same attribute at once to belong and not to belong to the same thing and in the same relation. The psychological version maintains that it is impossible for a person to suppose at the same time that the same thing both is and is not. The logical version maintains that contradictory statements cannot be both true and not true at the same time. Thus, Aristotle himself acknowledges that this most basic and most certain of logical laws is analogical in nature. MacIntyre's insight is to ground this law of logic in our animal biology and, ultimately, in history.

In 'First Principles, Final Ends, and Contemporary Philosophical Issues' MacIntyre makes statements that point vaguely in this direction. He notes that for Aquinas Principium, especially when used in the sense of a First Principle, has a double meaning. Aquinas sometimes 'uses "*principium*" of an axiom furnishing a syllogism with a premise and speaks of a principle composed of a subject and predicate … but also uses "*principium*" in speaking of that to which principles refer, referring to the elements to which composite bodies can be resolved'.[27] This discussion makes a point similar to his argument in 'Colors, Cultures, and Practices' regarding the intertwining of the social and ontological orders. When applied to first principles, the upshot is that first principles are not for Aquinas something abstract, but something rooted in the familiar, everyday world of the rational agent. They can be formulated as statements, but those statements are inextricably bound up with material objects. In other words, logical first principles must be evident in our biological nature and our historical/temporally distended development. This view is latent in MacIntyre's essay on First Principles. In later

[25] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV.3, 1005a20.
[26] *Ibid.*, 1005b13-24.
[27] MacIntyre, 'First Principles and Final Ends', 144.

sections of the essay, MacIntyre mentions in passing, but does not develop in detail, the importance of rhetorical tropes in undergirding dialectic in Aristotle's *Topics*.[28] Had he done so, this point about First Principles would have become more apparent.

I am not the first to identify the law of non-contradiction as central for simultaneously sustaining MacIntyre's historicism and Thomism. D'Andrea also notes understanding Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle on the principle of non-contradiction offers resources for MacIntyre to respond to critiques such as those levelled by Janet Coleman to the effect that MacIntyre cannot be both a Historicist and Thomistic Aristotelian.[29] What he finds important about this logical law for MacIntyre's project, however, is not what I find important about it, at least for my present purposes. He rightly observes that Aquinas allows for the possibility that although this First Principle is embedded in all thought humans can fail to formulate it explicitly. Thus, the process of trial and error that leads to the successful formulation of such first principles can lead to the telling of a history. Nevertheless, D'Andrea fails to recognize that the fact that this First Principle is embedded in all human thought for Aquinas re-emerges in MacIntyre's narratives, where it is instantiated first in our animal biology and second in the history of the lives of moral agents. He does not discern the connection between practices being 'spontaneous social constellations' and their role in grounding rationality.[30] If they are to fulfill the latter task, then practices themselves must embody certain logical laws. Thus, MacIntyre's defeat of relativism is not distinct from his historicism, as D'Andrea thinks. His historicism enables his defeat of relativism.

To understand better how MacIntyre achieves this, consider two often overlooked, yet crucial, statements in his presentation of tradition-based rationality in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*. At the outset of his presentation, MacIntyre notes that all of the traditions that he has surveyed accept the basic laws of logic.[31] Later, he notes that the arguments formulated and conducted during a tradition's epistemological crisis will involve the development of new rituals, social customs, and forms of clothing.[32] I have found no commentator on MacIntyre who

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[28] MacIntyre, 'First Principles and Final Ends', 160-165.
[29] Thomas D. D'Andrea, *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue: The Thought of Alasdair MacIntyre*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 410-414.
[30] *Ibid.*, 409.
[31] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 351.
[32] *Ibid.*, 355.

gives much thought to the connection between these two observations.[33] If we are to grasp how MacIntyre's account of traditions of enquiry enables the full functioning of human rationality, from the cobbler to the quantum chemist, then we must discern the connection between these two statements. Presumably, all of the traditions surveyed by MacIntyre needed to accept logic prior to their formalization of logic. Otherwise the Homeric tradition could never have provided the cultural leaven from which the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition developed. How, though, could they have done this? The only sufficient answer is that logic, or logical structures, must have been embedded in their rituals, customs, forms of clothing, etc. Thus, MacIntyre's historicism itself defeats the charge of relativism precisely because for him the contingent beginnings of a tradition are themselves logical, or at least rational, all the way down. On this account, temporal progression is partially constitutive of rationality.

With this in mind, let us resume investigating how MacIntyre roots the law of non-contradiction in our history and biology. He identifies the law of non-contradiction in our animal biology through his account of how human animal nature provides the matter within and upon which the virtues cultivate and are cultivated so as to achieve true human flourishing. Because we cannot engage in logical thinking but as embodied biological agents, the law of non-contradiction must find some expression within our biologically-conditioned actions. Here, MacIntyre's discussion of dolphin intelligence in *Dependent Rational Animals* becomes helpful. He argues that to identify practical reasoning in animals, which although referring here primarily to non-human animals does not preclude the following criterion's application to humans, three conditions must be satisfied: (1) a set of goods at which they aim; (2) a set of judgements about which actions are likely to be effective at achieving these goods; (3) set of counterfactual conditions to connect (1) and (2).[34]

These three conditions are met in the process by which dolphins adapt to changing hunting conditions. Marine biologists, MacIntyre notes, have documented numerous cases in which dolphins have begun a hunt with one strategy before retooling or even abandoning it in favor of a different strategy. Such instances exemplify the embodied, distended law of non-contradiction at work in animal practical rationality. A given dolphin pod has adopted one strategy for completing a hunt successfully,

[33] D'Andrea comes the closest in comparing MacIntyre's presentation of tradition-based rationality to an Aristotelian *epagoge* but fails to see the significance of the fact that each tradition MacIntyre surveys accepts the laws of logic. D'Andrea, *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue*, 329.
[34] MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals*, 25.

yet in the course of that hunt it becomes clear that the current strategy will not result in the successful completion of that hunt. In the very least, the ontological law of non-contradiction is at work, as manifested in the dolphin pod's actions. Given recent work in animal cognition, it is also at least possible that the psychological law of non-contradiction is at work, which would result in the following description of their behaviour.[35] The dolphins cannot simultaneously believe that the good they are seeking is food and continue hunting in the manner in which they currently hunt; otherwise there would be a contradiction between their practical reasoning and their actions. Some kind of counterfactual reasoning is demonstrably occurring in these instances because researchers have also documented instances of dolphin pods at play wherein a single hunting strategy is pursued without regard to its effectiveness in snaring fish. Thus, under the terms given by MacIntyre, the dolphins are capable of differentiating what their aims are in a given situation, namely hunting to eat, from what their aims are in another situation, namely hunting as play. Thus, in this account of biologically-grounded animal reasoning, the set of counterfactuals constitutes the manifestation of the law of non-contradiction.

III.

To understand how MacIntyre develops a historicist account of the law of non-contradiction, I believe that it is necessary to depart from MacIntyre's own justifications for melding Thomism and Historicism, though not to reject them. In some of his writings, MacIntyre has indicated that he finds support for a historicist reading of Aquinas in the fact that the practice of scholastic disputation always left room for further debate on the matter and the revision of earlier answers.[36] Elsewhere, he has pointed to the fact that Aquinas notes in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle* that the philosopher is a lover of stories to make this point, and D'Andrea has to a certain extent tried to elucidate this

[35] While I am convinced that the psychological law of non-contradiction is at work in instances such as the dolphin pod's shift of hunting strategies, I refrain from making that argument at greater length because of spatial constraints. Some recent philosophical work on this matter, which summarizes work on dolphin cognition done after *Dependent Rational Animals*, is Kristin Andrews, *The Animal Mind: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Animal Cognition* (London: Routledge, 2015), especially 99-108.
[36] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopedia, Genealogy, and Tradition* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1990), 113-124, 129-137.

point.[37] Both of MacIntyre's Thomistic references, and D'Andrea's attempt at explication, remain underdeveloped. I assert that there is a deeper, explicitly Thomistic, justification for historicism. This justification arises from certain answers given to the articles of the first question of *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*.

In Question I, article 3 it is asked whether or not truth is found only in the intellect 'joining and separating'.[38] The point in dispute is whether or not truth consists merely in the correct formulation of essential definitions/quiddities. Aquinas replies that truth is found in the joining and separating of judgements with apprehensions rather than in the formulation of definitions. Judgements, then, are what one calls true and false and a judgement is said to be true when it conforms to the external reality of the thing about which an apprehension has been formed. The intellect judges when it asserts that something is or is not the case. With respect to things external to the intellect, the truth may be predicated of them insofar as they are conformed with the divine intellect or, as far as is possible for their own nature, they are conformed to the human intellect. The problem with the essential definitions/quiddities is that they do not furnish the mind with anything distinctly its own as do judgements.

When the issue of whether or not some truths besides the First Truth are eternal is raised, Aquinas responds by distinguishing between two different ways by which things can receive the name true.[39] First, they can receive it extrinsically, which occurs via their relationship to the divine intellect; this kind of truth is eternal according to Aquinas. Secondly, they can receive the designation of true intrinsically; this is the inherent truth of created things and their truth in the human intellect. This truth, whether it is that of things or that of propositions, is explicitly not eternal according to Aquinas. Our intellect can multiply this kind of truth either by knowing a multiplicity of things or by the multiplicity of the ways of knowing.

The next article focuses on whether created truth is mutable or immutable.[40] In his reply to this question, Aquinas distinguishes between two ways in which a thing is said to be changed. First, it can be said to have changed when its body is changeable. Since truth consists in a form,

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[37] MacIntyre, 'First Principles and Final Ends', 168; D'Andrea, *Tradition, Rationality, and Virtue*, 412.

[38] Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, Q.1, a 3.

[39] *Ibid.,* Q.1, a 5.

[40] *Ibid.,* Q.1, a 6.

it cannot be changeable in this way. Second, a thing is said to be changed when something else is said to be changed according to it, as when we say that a color is changed because the color of a body has changed. In this sense truth might be called changeable. We can only examine this with respect to that which is inhering within a thing, not with respect to that which is merely extrinsically related to a thing. Within these limits, then, there are two ways whereby inhering forms are said to be changed with respect to a single subject. After a change, a special form does not retain its selfsame form either according to its act of existence or according to its intelligible character. Regarding general forms, however, after a change they retain the same intelligible character but *not* the same act of existing. Thus, if we take the truth inherent in things, then truth is said to be changed inasmuch as some things are said to be changed with respect to the truth.

Initially the upshot of this argument might seem merely to affirm that we can say that it was true to say, 'John was very pale' until he stayed out in the July sun too long, at which point it became true to say, 'John is red'. Physical realities change; so what is the point? Remember, though, that the truth for Aquinas is constituted in the act of joining and separating judgements with apprehensions. Apprehensions of what? Most often, these will be apprehensions of physical realities, and they will always be apprehensions of contextualized realities. Also bear in mind what was discussed earlier regarding Aquinas on the unity of the intellect: the division between the practical and the speculative intellect does not negate the overall unity of the intellect, especially when speculation occurs concerning conclusions of the practical syllogisms, i.e., actions. We should consequently be hesitant to believe that judgements of the speculative intellect will be secured against the changes in the act of existence of various general forms. Therefore, the joining and separating of speculative intellectual judgements with apprehensions will be conditioned by the act of existing those general forms may have taken at a given point in time. Nevertheless, this does not mean that those speculative judgements will be held captive to the conditions in which they were made to the extent that speculative judgements separated from one another by time and space cannot be grouped together in legitimate and meaningful sets, for Aquinas affirms that their intelligible character remains the same. The task that is then enjoined upon someone who would seek to understand whether or not a series of speculative judgements are consistent with each other is to determine whether or not the various acts of existence with which they are joined in apprehension

are manifestations of the same intelligible character. What should now be apparent, then, is that this will be an exercise in ascertaining narrative unity across time and space, i.e., across history.[41] The question to be answered in such a philosophical narrative is whether or not the members of a given set of speculative judgements contradict one another in their identification of the intelligible character of a general form. Thus, Aquinas's position on truth requires for certain kinds of enquiry a historicizing narrative seeking to satisfy the law of non-contradiction.

This analogical spectrum of cases in which the law of non-contradiction manifests itself can also easily account for reasoning about abstract objects. Among the possible abstract and nonmaterial objects about which one might reason, mathematical objects initially appear the most vexing. Nevertheless, mathematical truths can easily be placed at one end of this spectrum of the law of non-contradiction, and perhaps not as far removed from the realm of animal rationality as we might think. The basic mathematical operators, including +, -, and =, are in a fundamental sense used to express equivalence. Whether it is simple addition or differential calculus, math problems seek some form of A=A. One knows that the wrong answer has been provided if one reaches the end with an expression of some form of A≠A. There is no more basic expression of the law of non-contradiction than this. Thus, if one understands MacIntyre's various criteria of truth and falsehood as a set of analogous manifestations of the law of non-contradiction, then he can move seamlessly from animal rationality to mathematical truth.

One might here object that while these human acts of reasoning about abstract objects occurs within time, those abstract objects about which humans reason, e.g. numbers, are not time-bound, nor then is the structure of our reasoning about them. Thus, there is no need for MacIntyre's criteria of truth and falsity to account for such acts of reasoning, since such acts need not be evaluated within an account of rationality rooted in our biology and history. Such a claim, however, misunderstands the Thomistic notion of truth with which MacIntyre and I are working. Truth is for Aquinas something ascribed to judgements that are correctly joined to specific quiddities. While a quiddity is

[41] I am here deliberately refraining from offering a definition of narrative. Moreover, I believe that I am following MacIntyre's own reasoning on this point. For example, even in MacIntyre's section entitled 'Narratives' in chapter four of *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* he offers no definition of narrative. Moreover, he is willing to use narrative to describe an activity or family of activities that encompasses both discussing the lives of individuals, specific conversations, and the development of philosophical arguments. See MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 204ff., and MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 8.

expected to capture the nature of a thing, the quiddity itself is a linguistic formulation, and the judgement is a human mental act. Judgements then are in humans an exercise of the intellectual power of the soul. Yet this exercise of the intellectual power of the soul is coextensive with thought, and consequently requires language, something MacIntyre himself would not deny. Both quiddities and judgements are therefore formally conditioned by linguistic formulations. Such linguistic formulations are determined in part by the histories that our words have, and in the evaluation of those formulations we must pay attention to those histories to grasp sufficiently what has been articulated, even in reasoning about abstract objects.

A few examples from MacIntyre's writings, ranging from the animalistic to the tradition-level, will now suffice. The dog who displays the pre-linguistic notion of truth and falsity in *Dependent Rational Animals* exhibits a very basic understanding of the law of non-contradiction. Fido understands that the squirrel cannot both be in the tree and not in the tree.[42] Thus, when comparing the two pictures of the world, he recognizes that one of them must be discarded—the one based on older sensory information. Thus, the discrepancy across time is in fact a distended, embodied instance of the law of non-contradiction. In *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, we find that these embodied instances of the law of non-contradiction can cause epistemological crises.[43] Greek society in the heroic age believed that which of two men was more virtuous could be decided based on which one triumphed in the *agon*. The time came, however, when the man who clearly better exemplified the heroic virtues did *not* triumph in the *agon*. Thus, the embodied, distended law of non-contradiction comes into play once again. Previously, Archaic Greeks possessed a method by which a man's virtue could be accurately measured and gave expression to their society's constitutive virtues. Now, however, a discrepancy between the ability of the method to measure those virtues and the extent to which certain men clearly possessed those virtues became manifest. Thus, the contest and the catalogue of virtues could not be simultaneously accepted. One or the other had to go.

[42] This is clearly another area where the terminology used to describe animal rationality might raise objections in some quarters. Fido acts according to the law, the objection would go, but that does not mean that he *understands* it. Here I must defer to Wittgenstein and say that the grammar of the word 'know' is closely related to the grammar of the word 'can'. See Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §150.
[43] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 19-29.

This notion of an embodied, distended law of non-contradiction can also be put to work explaining the more complex instances of MacIntyre's tradition-based rationality. For example, as was discussed above, Galileo resolved the epistemological crisis facing early modern astronomy by constructing a new narrative of the history of astronomy that included a new account of what appeal to facts and observation had to be. In so doing, he presented a new picture of the world, next to which older astronomical models could not be held simultaneously. One of the models had to be rejected, and that which failed to provide as comprehensive an explanation on the basis of this new account of what constituted appeal to the facts was discarded in time.

This example also illustrates that this notion of an embodied, distended law of non-contradiction can undergird both demonstration and dialectic, crucially distinctive forms of reasoning within MacIntyre's Thomistic account of enquiry.[44] The former can roughly be understood as reasoning from within a particular science within a particular tradition because it is apodictic and necessary in its conclusions, the latter as reasoning either from a given tradition's architectonic position both about how that tradition might organize itself internally and how it will define itself in relation to other traditions by classifying those traditions in certain ways. The role that the law of non-contradiction plays in demonstration is obvious enough. Regarding dialectic, however, I maintain that the dialectic of tradition, in seeking to understand its own progression across time and why exactly it is the tradition that it is and not another tradition, makes use of the embodied, distended law of non-contradiction in the following way. By examining the extent to which different formulations of a tradition's basic tenets are capable of being harmonized and assimilated, i.e., to what extent different formulations of a given tradition contradict each other, adherents of that tradition can determine the extent to which their tradition is coherent. By classifying other traditions in terms of the extent to which their basic tenets contradict the basic tenets of one's own, one can understand how one's tradition stands in relation to others.

The desire for coherency, or the avoidance of contradiction, outlined above also has bearing on practical reason. MacIntyre himself notes that Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* as a contemporary of Galileo, and that both *Hamlet* and early modern astronomy suffered from too many mutually exclusive possible schema with which to interpret the world.[45] There we

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[44] MacIntyre, 'First Principles and Final Ends', 160-164.
[45] MacIntyre, 'Epistemological Crises and Dramatic Narrative', 456.

see the extent to which the first principle of practical reason and the law of non-contradiction at work in the natural sciences are manifestations of an underlying unity. The need for coherency in an agent's life mirrors the need for coherency in the schema that one uses to understand the natural world. Furthermore, this coherency is also at work in MacIntyre's stress on the need for our lives to exhibit narrative unity if we and our projects are to succeed.

Concern for the possibility of narrative unity in modern life, considered both as a whole and in individual cases of practical deliberation occupies much of *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*. Engagement with this text will also clarify the extent to which the coherency aspect of the criterion of truth that I have outlined also requires the presence of a correspondence aspect.[46] What MacIntyre calls Morality both is the product of and further cultivates a set of socio-economic relations in which we are all Hamlet. The need for coherency, for the avoidance of contradiction, drives MacIntyre's focus on modernity's compartmentalization of life. From the perspective of the NeoAristotelian, inhabitants of late modernity cannot but 'lead divided lives, at one time understanding themselves in one way, at one time in another'.[47] Because of this compartmentalization, inhabitants of modernity are often deficient in 'sociological self-knowledge'.[48]

Two salient features of Morality generate the kind of problematic embodied, distended contradictions identified above. First, Morality's ultimately false claim to be universally translatable across cultures cultivates a false confidence that leads an agent to move with the same set of abstract principles from one particular, historically conditioned context to another. Through this process a previously coherent moral framework falters because that to which the coherent framework must correspond, 'the roles and relationships within which one is involved', are either no longer in existence or not present in a given domain.[49] This analysis has roots in MacIntyre's earlier work, but the discussions of economic shifts in chapter two of *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity* illustrate how modern social relations frustrate attempts to live a life that is truly coherent.

[46] For MacIntyre's argument that tradition-based rationality requires a hybrid of these two theories of truth, see *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 351-356.
[47] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 190.
[48] *Ibid.*, 212-213.
[49] *Ibid.*

The drastic differences between Aquinas's understanding of acquisitiveness and that of Hume and Smith discussed by MacIntyre have the upshot that from the perspective of the modern liberal tradition Aquinas's picture of the moral life no longer looks like an appeal to nature.[50] By failing to correspond to a set of social relations producing a picture of the natural human life, a lived example of Aquinas's portrait of human flourishing no longer seems coherent, thereby depriving those who seek to live by it the kind of coherency prized by agents who seek to be at home in the modern liberal capitalist order. The coherency prized by the theoretical proponents of this order—MacIntyre's examples include Stuart Hampshire, Isaiah Berlin, and Williams—paradoxically avoids total coherency.[51] Precisely because it recognizes the socio-culturally-conditioned nature of enquiry MacIntyre's Historicist Thomism recognizes that it must preserve and cultivate certain social relations if coherent lives are to be lived.

MacIntyre illustrates this through the biographical exemplars in the book's final chapter. His narration of Sandra Day O'Connor's life turns on the degree to which her commitment to the project of liberal democracy deprived her of the sociological self-knowledge necessary to recognize the incoherencies in her pragmatic jurisprudence.[52] In contrast, the most successful of the four exemplars, Denis Faul, evidences a sophisticated coherency, one that sought to balance effectively his commitment to a united Ireland with his theological commitments to prohibitions against political violence. Faul's desire, even if an implicit one, to live a coherently narratable life led him to be branded as beyond the pale of acceptability by a modern liberal state, the United Kingdom, but also allowed him to recognize what social relations were necessary if the coherency of Irish Catholic life was to be sustained in the future, specifically parochial education.[53]

If this discussion has seemed to wander far from the original topic then here the discussion comes full circle. The second salient characteristic of Morality that exemplifies where it fails to meet the criteria of truth that I have outlined above is its focus on problem cases.[54] 'Modern Morality' focuses on such problem cases precisely because it tramples upon the criterion of truth that I have characterized as an

[50] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 88-93.
[51] *Ibid.*, 222-223.
[52] *Ibid.*, 270-273.
[53] *Ibid.*, 302-303 and 308-309.
[54] *Ibid.*, 116.

embodied, distended law of non-contradiction. It seeks to cultivate incoherent lives exemplified by Ó Cadhain in *Cré na Cille*, a narrative in which literally disembodied distension without teleological resolution leads to increasing incoherence.[55] MacIntyre's Thomistic Aristotelianism focuses less on such problem cases precisely because it seeks to narrate a coherent life corresponding to a set of social relations that make it possible for such coherence to be enacted by embodied, distended agents. The Divine Comedy and Denis Faul's life present, respectfully, the ideal version of this and demonstrate the possibility of living lives in modernity in accordance with this criterion of truth.[56]

The notion of an embodied, distended law of non-contradiction at the heart of MacIntyre's accounts of rational justification allows us to take MacIntyre's work in moral philosophy and his work in the philosophy of the social sciences as part of a truly unified whole. Furthermore, it connects the insights of his 1990 Aquinas Lecture to his historicism. First principles cannot in fact be made definitively evident at the outset of tradition-based enquiry but become evident once one has progressed sufficiently towards the *telos* of one's enquiry. [57] In historicized philosophical narratives of traditions, they become evident once a tradition has proven either the strength or the weakness of its resources either by responding adequately and coherently to an epistemological crisis or by revealing its inherent contradictions through a muddled response to an epistemological crisis, respectively. By successfully developing a Thomist ontology of the virtues that nevertheless relies on history and biology, MacIntyre has perhaps developed a distinctive brand of Thomism: Historicist Thomism.

[55] MacIntyre, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, 234-236.
[56] For MacIntyre's use of Dante, see *Three Rival Versions*, 142-145.
[57] MacIntyre, 'First Principles and Final Ends', 158.