Pursuing the Idea/l of an Educated Public: Philosophy’s Contributions to Radical School Reform

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Alasdair MacIntyre has argued that our modern, post-Enlightenment societies lack the shared standards of moral argument that are prerequisite to productive public debate. He measures our situation against the ideal of an educated public, members of which share enough common ground to resolve disagreements rationally because they have been prepared to participate in disciplined argument by their school and university curricula. This paper identifies questions to be addressed and tasks to be undertaken by philosophers who seek radical school reform in order to help create the intellectual, cultural and institutional conditions for productive public debate.

Without radical changes in our schools we are unlikely to bring an educated public into being. Yet without an educated public we are unlikely to bring about those radical changes. I say ‘unlikely’. What we confront is very great difficulty, not impossibility. (Alasdair MacIntyre, in MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 17).

INTRODUCTION

For many years Alasdair MacIntyre has argued that public debates are unproductive in modern, post-Enlightenment societies because we lack the necessary background consensus, most particularly, agreement on shared standards of moral argument that can themselves be rationally vindicated. If his observations are accurate, ‘We do not even have enough agreement to be able to arrive at a common mind about what it is that we should be quarrelling about’ (MacIntyre, 1987, p. 28). He measures our situation against the ideal of an educated public, members of which share the common ground required for successful debate in part because preparation for participation in disciplined argument is a central aim of their school and university curricula (1987, pp. 18–19, 23; MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 16).
In this paper I review what is required of an adequate philosophical framework for the radical school reform that MacIntyre sees as essential to the formation of an educated public. Along the way, I offer what I hope are useful perspectives on two questions raised in the recent dialogue on education between MacIntyre and Dunne (2002): ‘Is teaching a practice?’ and ‘Is philosophy of education a distinct area of philosophical enquiry?’ My main goal, however, is to consider how philosophers might help create the intellectual, cultural and institutional conditions for constructive argument on issues of public concern. My assumption is that social, economic and political policies accountable to the outcome of responsible rational debate would be more ethically and environmentally sound than those produced by our present systems of governance, in which profit is so often pursued at the expense of people and the planet.

The paper has three parts. In the first part I describe what I imagine teaching would look like in ‘virtue-centred’ schools designed to embody MacIntyre’s educational ideals. In the second, I review the key features of an educated public to identity what a philosophical framework must provide to be adequate to the task of radical school reform. Finally, I conclude with reflections on our particular responsibilities as academic philosophers to help create the conditions for productive public debate.

ENVISIONING VIRTUE-CENTRED SCHOOLS

The very different explicit beliefs, implicit assumptions, norms, priorities and practices that characterise rival and incommensurable moral traditions will give rise to very different forms of teaching. Therefore, to determine if teaching is or is not a practice in MacIntyre’s sense of the term, we must first specify what the aims and methods are of the form of teaching we have in mind. To this end, let us imagine that a network of schools has been established in which teaching is informed, not just by MacIntyre’s account of practices and their internal goods, but also by his characterisation of the ethics of virtue and the rationality of moral traditions, which provide practices with their proper conceptual context.

To prepare students to form an educated public, teachers at these schools undertake ‘both the development of those powers that enable children to become reflective and independent members of their families and political communities and the inculcation of those virtues that are needed to direct us towards the achievement of our common and individual goods’ (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 2). What are teachers doing to achieve their goals?

Much of the time teachers are initiating students into practices, which include studies in traditional school subjects such as mathematics, history, English composition, literature and the sciences. In most cases, teachers are helping students both to gain a generalist’s rather than a specialist’s knowledge of these subjects and to integrate diverse disciplinary perspectives in problem-based learning activities (MacIntyre, 1987, p. 17). Accordingly, teachers and students are frequently found outside
the school in social and physical environments that provide opportunities
to test knowledge and skills in application. Some of those skills have been
learned through the judicious use by teachers and students of up-to-date
digital technologies. Others have been acquired through traditional crafts
and trades: students learn to work with wood and fabric as well as
keyboards and screens because perceptual acuity and manual dexterity are
valued no less than facility with numbers and concepts (p. 16).

Not all teaching and learning in the schools is task-oriented. Among the
practices to which students are introduced, the visual and performing arts
are well represented along with games, sports and athletics. Depending
upon the location and character of the particular school they attend,
students may take part in flower-arranging, horse-back riding, archery,
poetry, calligraphy or karate. In all cases, however, listening to and telling
stories is a common feature of school life on both formal and informal
occasions, with teachers and students assuming both roles. In these and
other ways, teachers take to heart MacIntyre’s advice that ‘the communal
life of the school is in good order when it is recognised not only as a place
for apprenticeship through training by means of inescapably laborious
drills, but also as a place of genuine, if small-scale, cultural achievement
within which a variety of practices flourishes’ (MacIntyre and Dunne,

In facilitating student learning, teachers are more or less directive
according to the complexity of the tasks at hand and the maturity of their
pupils. At elementary levels, students are provided with instruction and
coaching in the key facts, concepts and competencies associated with the
various practices. More advanced students are given opportunities to
conduct, both individually and in groups, relatively independent studies,
experiments, projects and performances. In the latter cases, student
learning is enhanced by guidance and feedback from teachers serving as
supervisors or co-investigators. As students gain the requisite personal
experience and intellectual sophistication, they are introduced by their
teachers to the histories of the practices and in particular the dialectical
development of their standards of excellence. Teachers are concerned that
students not only gain skills and background in literary, historical,
scientific, artistic and other forms of knowledge but also become able to
discern the internal goods that are the ‘point and purpose’ of the practices
(p. 2).

Teachers bring to their work different interests and areas of expertise
according to the particular disciplines and other practices in which they
specialise. At the same time, they share a common vision of the overriding
good of human life, which provides the perspective from which the more
particular goods internal to the various practices are rank-ordered and the
pursuit of those goods is organised both inside and outside schools. The
school curriculum, like the constitution of a well-ordered society, thus
expresses ‘a set of principles about how goods are to be ordered into a way
of life’ (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 33–34).

The vision of the good life shared by teachers at virtue-centred schools
informs their efforts to achieve a range of educational objectives that go
beyond initiating students into particular academic, technological, and artistic practices. Chief among these aims is to guide students in acquiring the full range of intellectual and moral virtues that make achieving genuine goods possible, not least of which is learning itself (MacIntyre, 1990, pp. 68, 130). The first step in acquiring virtues of character is to follow rules that establish proper habits of moral feeling, perception and action. Accordingly, teachers strive to embody the wisdom and authority of the moral tradition from which their school’s vision of the overriding human good derives, so that they will provide students both with the right rules to follow and with the right inspiration to obey them. This experience of doing what the genuinely virtuous person would do provides students with a basis for developing practical intelligence; that is, for learning to judge what virtuous conduct requires in social contexts too complex for the simple application of rules (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 113–116, 194).

In order that students will have the appropriate breadth of experience to develop the virtues required for achievement of ‘common and individual goods’, teachers arrange that students live, work and play with those against whom they might harbour ethnic, racial or other prejudice. From their own experience in intercultural work, the teachers know that ‘laughing together at the same jokes, sharing the same griefs and regrets, caring for others and being recipients of their gratitude, being cared for by others, engagement in common tasks where all achieve or none do: all these are solvents of prejudice’ (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 18). Teachers also require students to participate in establishing and maintaining the regulations that define appropriate school conduct both inside and outside classrooms. For example, some students are chosen to sit on the restorative justice committees that decide what responses are appropriate when the norms of the school community are violated. In addition, teachers invite students to help establish school priorities for curricular and extra-curricular activities in the light of budgetary restraints. Teachers are concerned that all their students, by means of these and other forms of participation in school governance, learn to join intellectual and moral virtue in sound practical judgement in part by coming to appreciate the ethical and political principles embodied in the organisation of school life.

The teachers’ various initiatives to support students in developing practical intelligence are an integral part of their efforts to discharge three further professional responsibilities that are essential to the overall educational mission of virtue-centred schools. The first of these responsibilities is to initiate students into theoretical and practical moral enquiry as understood within the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 124–145, 172–179; 1990, p. 63). Theoretical moral enquiry seeks through deductive and dialectical arguments to formulate increasingly adequate conceptions of the overriding good of human life. Indeed, students would be unable to appreciate the rationale for their own education if they did not acquire some knowledge, not only of the vision of the good life that inspires their teachers, but also of the form of intellectual enquiry through which that vision is developed and defended.

against rival moral perspectives. Practical moral enquiry seeks accurate judgements about what particular people must do to achieve the best life possible under their particular circumstances. Accordingly, in part through instruction in the history of their moral traditions and the lives of its exemplars, students are brought to realise that the most important story they must learn to tell is of their own journey toward human fulfilment:

The educator’s problem then is to take students from a grasp of narratives and of narrative forms to the point at which they, having recognised their own lives as narratives, begin to ask: ‘What would it be to complete the narrative of my life successfully? What good would I have had to achieve, if I had achieved that?’ (MacIntyre, 1987, p. 10).

In all areas of study, theoretical and practical moral enquiry in particular, teachers take great care to build through instruction and example the social relations among teachers and students ‘in and through which . . . deliberations and practical judgements are subjected to extended and systematic critical questioning’ (MacIntyre, 1999c, pp. 316–317). Though this, students learn that an important part of ‘respect for persons’ is holding themselves and other members of their community accountable to shared standards of responsible action and belief.

Theoretical and practical moral enquiry provide teachers with the normative foundations for their second task, which is to give students a civic education informed by a critical social theory that lays bare the operation of ‘free market’ ideology. Learning to analyse how educational, cultural, economic and political systems can operate to reproduce patterns of dominance and privilege, combined with their experience of living in a well-ordered school community, enables students (a) to discern when social institutions and policies do and do not serve genuine personal and community goods and (b) to identify opportunities for social and political reform. Teachers make civic education a central feature of their curricula to heed MacIntyre’s admonition that ‘Students should be taught how to identify their communities’ needs and how to distinguish the more urgent from the less urgent needs and how to find their way about within the political system’ (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 14).

The third responsibility teachers assume in virtue-centred schools is to guide students on spiritual paths that yield some direct experience and appreciation of the overriding good of human life. The teachers have learned that some degree of spiritual development is required before students are fully able to know and do what is of genuine benefit to themselves and their communities. On MacIntyre’s Thomistic view, the human potential for practical wisdom is only brought to perfection when pride is transformed into charity (caritas) through God’s gift of grace (Vokey, 2001, p. 182). Bernard Lonergan (1973, pp. 39, 104–119, 130–131) speaks of religious conversion in very similar terms as arising from a gift of unconditional love, the experience of which leads to conceptions of God as ‘supreme intelligence, truth, reality, righteousness, goodness’. Because they represent a variety of virtue-centred traditions,
teachers in different schools use a variety of different terms to speak about the kinds of personal transformations they hope to facilitate in their students. However, just because they realise it to be essential to everything else they hope to achieve, teachers do not see spiritual development as outside or separate from school life. Indeed, they realise that to do so would be to re-inforce some of the very forms of alienation and compartmentalisation that their curricula are intended to reverse. Accordingly, while teachers working at different schools introduce students to different contemplative and/or devotional disciplines following the spiritual teachings of Indigenous Peoples/First Nations, Hindu, Taoist, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, Wiccan or other traditions holding a vision of human perfectibility, they understand these disciplines as complementing the efforts to promote spiritual maturity that are integrated into all aspects of their schools.

So concludes my quick sketch of what I imagine the goals and methods of teaching would be in schools pursuing MacIntyre’s educational ideals. It is manifestly neither a complete nor a systematic development of his views. For one thing, I have spoken in generalities that would apply very differently in elementary, secondary or post-secondary educational institutions. Even so, I think it serves both to suggest some of the radical school reforms that creating an educated public would entail and to support an affirmative answer to the question ‘Is teaching a practice?’ Joseph Dunne (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, pp. 7–8) argues that, just because it is as much if not more about creating ‘a community of enquiry and of virtue’ as it is about direct instruction, teaching is a practice of school-making analogous to family-making. MacIntyre disagrees, arguing that teaching cannot be a practice because it does not have its own internal goods, but is always for the sake of goods internal to some other practice. However, MacIntyre appears to undermine this point when he later not only endorses the view that ‘achieving the ends of teaching requires that teachers engage in the practice of making and sustaining the communal life of school’ but also states that ‘our conception of the school is impoverished if we understand it as merely a preparatory institution’ (p. 9). I believe it is most consistent with MacIntyre’s overall conceptual framework to say that teaching can be the practice of creating and maintaining physical, cultural, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual environments in which students flourish while learning how to pursue what is genuinely good in their lives both before and after graduation. If I am correct, then such teaching would be a practice analogous to politics (in MacIntyre’s interpretation of the Aristotelian sense of the term) and with a similar internal good: those creating and maintaining both school and larger political communities are concerned ‘not with this or that particular good, but with human good as such’ (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 33–34; see also pp. 107–108).

Is philosophy of education a distinct area of philosophical enquiry? MacIntyre asserts that it is not on the grounds that teaching does not have its own internal goods: ‘Enquiries into education are an important part of enquiries into the nature and goods of those activities into which we need
to be initiated by education’ (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 9). I see no reason to disagree with MacIntyre on this point, so long as it is recognised that philosophy of education must also be concerned with, among other issues, the norms regulating pursuit of educational goals. Indeed, to propose that ‘the human good as such’ is teaching’s internal good would appear to support the view that philosophy of education is an integral and important part of the overall philosophical enterprise. However, I am not sure that much hangs on this point, for I cannot see that philosophy of education is any different in this regard than other specialisations such as political philosophy or ethics, which MacIntyre (1990) understands as aspects of natural theology.

What (if anything) hangs on the question of teaching’s status as a practice? If I am right, it follows from MacIntyre’s account of the ethics of virtue that teachers who express primary allegiance to the goods internal to some particular academic, literary, artistic or other practice are self-identified as bad teachers. For if students become ‘reflective and independent members of their families and political communities’ only by developing their potential for sound practical judgement, and if their attainment of practical wisdom is contingent upon having teachers who possess it themselves to some significant degree (MacIntyre, 1990, pp. 59–63, 82–83), then what is required of teachers to fulfil their professional responsibilities is that they commit first and foremost to cultivating in their own lives the intellectual and moral virtues that are an integral part of realising the overriding human good. Parker Palmer (1998) establishes a similar position when he maintains that, regardless of whether we teach at elementary, secondary or post-secondary schools, most fundamentally ‘we teach who we are’.

TOWARD A PHILOSOPHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RADICAL SCHOOL REFORM

MacIntyre’s educational views are Utopian, as he freely admits. The point he sees to imagining what ideal schools would look like from an Aristotelian-Thomistic perspective is to provide a measure of the successes and failures of our actual systems of public education (MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002, p. 15). Of course, an idealised picture of schools could also provide an objective at which to aim in educational reform. I believe that MacIntyre’s work provides a sound basis for a philosophical framework adequate to the task of radical school reform, which is to help citizens of modern pluralistic societies learn to create the common ground that is a necessary prerequisite to productive moral debate. At the same time, I also believe that his characterisation of the ethics of virtue and the rationality of moral traditions leaves questions unanswered that are central to his efforts to restore the philosophical preconditions for an educated public. What are those questions?

According to MacIntyre, the members of an educated public are able to engage in productive rational debate because they share, among other
agreements, standards of moral argument that can themselves be ratio-
nally vindicated (p. 16). Conversely, the interminable character of modern 
moral debate is due in large part to the failure of the central project of 
Enlightenment moral philosophy, which was to provide a tradition-
independent justification of the rational principles that would inform 
public discourse:

It was a central aspiration of the Enlightenment, an aspiration the 
formulation of which was itself a great achievement, to provide for debate 
in the public realm standards and methods of rational justification by 
which alternative courses of action in every sphere of life could be 
adjudged just or unjust, rational or irrational, enlightened or unenlight-
tened. So, it was hoped, reason would displace authority and tradition. 
Rational justification was to appeal to principles undeniable by any 
rational person and therefore independent of all those social and cultural 
particularities which the Enlightenment thinkers took to be the mere 
accidental clothing of reason in particular times and places (MacIntyre, 
1988, p. 6; see also 1984a, p. 39).

MacIntyre claims that this Enlightenment project failed, and indeed had to 
fail, for two main reasons. The first reason is that their pre-occupation with 
tradition-independent justification prevented Enlightenment philosophers 
from appreciating the historical and dialectical process through which the 
standards of rational argument can be vindicated. Accordingly, MacIntyre 
has gone to great lengths to explain the conditions under which and the 
processes through which: (a) members of communities of enquiry can 
validate their constituent agreements in a non-circular and non-founda-
tional way; and (b) people representing rival and incommensurable 
traditions of enquiry can assess the strengths and limitations of their 
respective points of view without recourse to tradition-independent 
standards of rational justification (Vokey, 2001, pp. 49–65). The result 
is his account of the rationality of traditions:

a conception of rational enquiry as embodied in a tradition, a conception 
according to which the standards of rational justification themselves 
emerge from and are part of a history in which they are vindicated by the 
way in which they transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for 
the defects of their predecessors within the history of that same 
tradition’ (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 7).

The second reason the Enlightenment project had to fail was its rejection 
of teleological world views (MacIntyre, 1984a, pp. 52–59; see also 1983a, 
pp. 8–9; 1990, pp. 191–194). MacIntyre defines teleological world views 
as having three basic components: (a) an analysis of how people are now; 
(b) a conception of how people could be if they realised their full potential 
or telos; and (c) a description of how people could make the transition 
from the former to the latter state. These world-views include the belief 
that all people have the same basic human nature and corresponding desire 
to actualise their full potential, and so all will experience frustration and
disappointment to the degree that they fail to realise the human telos. MacIntyre argues that, within such frameworks of beliefs, ethical ideals and standards of conduct can be rationally justified in terms of their ability to help people achieve the highest form of human fulfilment. He concludes that, because they have eliminated from ethics any vision of human nature in a perfected state, Enlightenment philosophers are left without a clear basis for the justification of moral principles, virtues or laws. Current debates are unproductive where moral commitments are involved, in part because, in a post-Enlightenment world, we lack a shared understanding of what it could mean for moral judgements to be true. Accordingly, to provide for the possibility of an educated public, MacIntyre has undertaken to reconstruct an Aristotelian-Thomistic ethics of virtue in which moral reasoning and argument can appeal to the possibility of human fulfilment. A shared vision of the overriding good of human life would be essential to virtue-centred schools precisely because, according to MacIntyre (1984a, p. 275), it is only from such a perspective that we can identify which human qualities are genuine intellectual or moral virtues.

I agree with MacIntyre (assuming I interpret him correctly) that only through dialectical argument would it be possible for members of our pluralistic societies to arrive at agreement on the rationally justified standards of moral argument that are required for productive public debate. I also agree that, in an ideal school, students would learn how to participate in the process of recognising and extending the common ground shared among members of different moral communities by considering what each perspective reveals of the others’ strengths and limitations (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 398; Dunne and MacIntyre, 2002, pp. 11–12). Against MacIntyre, however, I have argued that a teleological world view does not by itself provide the ethics of virtue with a satisfactory response to moral relativism. I have shown how, because he does not describe the full sense in which the final human end or telos is properly characterised as intrinsically morally good, MacIntyre leaves unanswered both (a) how people can learn to recognise what the truly virtuous person would do in particular contexts and (b) what it could mean to say that virtuous action is properly valued for its own sake as well as for its contribution to human fulfilment. Without a satisfactory response to moral relativism, the ethics of virtue cannot provide a wholly adequate philosophical framework for radical school reform, because it cannot describe the full conditions and criteria for effective moral education and productive moral debate. Conversely, if I am right, pursuing the ideal of an educated public requires that we identify or construct an empirically sound and dialectically defensible world-view in which it makes sense to claim that some things are intrinsically morally good or right and other things are intrinsically morally bad or wrong. In the absence of such a view, it will be difficult to make the case that those pursuing the goods of effectiveness at the expense of the goods of excellence are mistaken about their own best interests (MacIntyre, 1988, pp. 30–46).
FROM IDEA/LS TO ACTIONS

Even if we were able to solve the problems of moral relativism that we have inherited, our philosophical frameworks would effect little if any change unless and until they were translated into educational initiatives on a socially significant scale. However, as MacIntyre observes, under the conditions of profound disagreement characteristic of modern liberal societies—disagreement mirrored in competing agendas for public education—plans for radical school reform are unlikely to be afforded the support and resources that their success would require. There is no doubt that those pursuing the ideal of an educated public are faced with a ‘very great difficulty’. However, this is all the more reason to begin translating our ideals and visions into action in those areas over which we have some control. For academic philosophers, those areas typically include teaching, supervision, research and programme administration. My reservations noted above notwithstanding, I believe MacIntyre’s work illustrates two ways, and points to a third, in which academic philosophers have particular opportunities and corresponding responsibilities to promote the conditions for productive public debate. What tasks do we face?

It is part of MacIntyre’s ideal of an educated public that its conversations and debates over the best way to live are ‘to some notable degree both an extension of and an interchange with the discussions within its universities’ (1987, p. 24). I think he is right to maintain that, when isolated from each other, public life and university enquiry are both deformed, and this is nowhere more the case than in moral and political philosophy (p. 30). The chief reason is that, since ethics and politics are practical enquiries, competing moral theories must be tested through living committed to their implications:

To live a practically well-ordered life is to embody the universal concepts which we comprehend and justify in those enquiries in the particularities of our moral lives. So the moral life is the life of embodied moral enquiry and those individuals who live out the moral life as farmers, or fishermen, or furniture makers embody more or less adequately in those lives, devoted in key part to their own crafts, what may often not be recognized as a theory, the product of the theorist’s very different craft, but which nevertheless is one. And the particularities of such lives in a variety of significant ways embody and continue the traditions, moral, religious, and intellectual, of such communities as those of the family, the city, the clan, and the nation. Thus political narratives of success or failure in the making and sustaining of such communities are also inescapably narratives of embodied moral enquiry, itself successful or unsuccessful (1990, pp. 79–80).

Following MacIntyre, I have argued that a moral tradition’s scheme of beliefs is only defensible in dialectical debate when it can be shown to be an integral part of the flourishing of its corresponding communities of moral enquiry and practice (Vokey, 2001, pp. 255–257). MacIntyre’s
work thus challenges us to be sufficiently familiar with the consequences of public policies that we can link moral theory and political practice—to demonstrate, perhaps, how the pursuit of genuine individual and collective goods cannot flourish in societies in which the virtues are not valued (MacIntyre, 1994, p. 193). For example, philosophers of education could and should integrate documented cases of the successes and failures resulting from different practices of teaching and schooling into the larger historical narratives employed in dialectical moral enquiry.

A second obstacle MacIntyre identifies to the conversations and debates through which an educated public might be formed are the rigidly enforced disciplinary boundaries that fragment academic enquiry. I see growing support for the view that ‘big picture’ thinking must be restored within and among university communities in order to address the complex problems of modern social life. However, I see few examples where academic reward structures have been changed to facilitate such collaboration. Here the challenge presented by MacIntyre’s example (1984a, p. 264; cf. 1990, pp. 235–236) is to resist in our own scholarly work the pressures to specialise that can compromise political critique and moral debate. A related task is to create through our own courses and programmes the local communities of enquiry in which instructors and students can learn to model the social relations and forms of multi-disciplinary discourse that would characterise an educated public.

I have argued above that, from the perspective of MacIntyre’s ethics of virtue, our first professional responsibility as teachers is to cultivate the intellectual and moral virtues that are an integral part of realising the overriding human good. I have also maintained that, in his Aristotelian-Thomistic view, fulfilling our potential for practical wisdom is contingent upon some degree of spiritual development. The idea that spiritual practice should be an integral part of the professional development of academics—particularly moral philosophers—would, I expect, be either simply dismissed by most university administrators and tenure review committees or else regarded as highly suspect. The general point is that privatising moral, spiritual and religious commitment is a particularly troublesome form of the ‘compartmentalisation’ of personal and professional lives that MacIntyre (1999c; 1990, p. 217) has identified as a threat to moral agency. If restoring confidence in the possibility of objective moral judgement is central to (re-)establishing the preconditions for an educated public, and if moral truth is grounded in a transcendent good experienced through some form of religious conversion and/or as the fruition of some path of spiritual discipline, then one task of radical school reform is to find responsible ways to (re)integrate spirituality into higher education, perhaps by demonstrating that philosophy once again can be a way of life as well as an academic discipline (Shusterman, 1997, pp. 1–15). This point is not new, of course—Mahatma Gandhi’s oft-quoted exhortation ‘Be the change you want to see in the world’ comes to mind—but I think it worth repeating not least because, if my own experience is any indication, the greatest difficulty here lies ‘not in knowing what to do . . . but in doing it’ (MacIntyre, 1987, p. 19).
NOTES

1. Miller and Seller’s (1985) descriptions of the different curriculum orientations associated with the transmission, transaction and transformation positions, along with MacIntyre’s remarks (1990, pp. 232–233) on Thomistic versus genealogical public presentations, illustrate and substantiate this claim.

2. See MacIntyre (1984a, pp. 188–191) on the distinction between internal and external goods.

3. If the recent literature on spirituality and education is any indication (Vokey, 2000, pp. 31–32), almost any aspect of schooling can become a vehicle for spiritual development under the direction of the right teacher.

4. Here I have in mind questions concerning the respective rights of children and parents in areas such as religious instruction and sex education.


7. The Centre for Study of Curriculum and Instruction at UBC (http://www.csci.educ.ubc.ca/), which under the inspired leadership of Karen Meyers, Carl Leggo and many others has created a supportive environment for innovative scholarship, exemplifies the kind of community-building initiatives I have in mind.