

POLITICAL & SOCIAL THOUGHT

Community, Tradition & Virtue

Instructions

When doing the reading for this class, there are the two basic kinds of information you need to understand:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What premises, assumptions, reasons, evidence, and other important considerations lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, it is *information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support and justify accepting the author's conclusions as opposed to other ones.

Reading

MacIntyre, A. (2007). The Virtues, the Unity of a Human Life and the Concept of a Tradition. [Chapter 15]. In *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (3rd ed., pp. 204–225). Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame. (Original work from 1981.)

Questions

1. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, what is needed to render a person's action intelligible? Why can't an action be understood in isolation?
2. As a result, how does MacIntyre conceive the structure of human life? What is MacIntyre's response to those who deny that life has this structure (like "Sartre/Roquentin")?
3. With this structure of life understood, what gives a life unity? Why does it require a conception of the good? What is this conception supposed to do and how does it lead to an understanding of both virtue and tradition?
4. Finally, how does all this lead MacIntyre to distinguish his conception of the person from that of "bureaucratic individualism"? Why does he believe that the bureaucratic idea is doomed to failure?

To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses (unless you miss or are late to class, and must then submit a written reading question review).

You do need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting. You may, during the following class, be randomly selected to present answers to these if selected to do so for a verbal reading question review.