

renewed consideration of the theology of suffering, and the possibility of reading the divine ecstasy of trinitarian kenotic love as the form of human relationships in general (per Lossky, for instance).

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ETHICS IN THE CONFLICTS OF MODERNITY: AN ESSAY ON DESIRE, PRACTICAL REASONING, AND NARRATIVE by Alasdair MacIntyre, *Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016, pp. xiii + 322, £28.99, hbk*

How much does the average undergraduate remember of the lectures and classes she sits through? Perhaps a few illustrations stick in the mind. At an undergraduate lecture I attended on Plato's *Meno* the lecturer described how Plato had appeared to him in a dream and resolved a key question for his Ph.D. thesis. Philosophers rarely divulge such visions, but the vision works on several levels in a commentary on a text which is about recalling lost knowledge. As moderns we immediately dismiss the notion that there could be any communing with the dead going on here, and look for naturalistic explanations. Yet even if we think the unthinkable, it is not obvious that Plato is the best interpreter of Plato.

Memory, what we remember and what we have forgotten, plays an essential role in Alasdair MacIntyre's influential study in moral philosophy and social theory, *After Virtue*. We may expect therefore that his latest book, *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*, written in his ninth decade, would provide a summation of his work: tying up the loose ends, clarifying questions of interpretation. On one level this expectation is met. Attentive readers of MacIntyre will detect ideas and themes reaching back to his early writings and moving through his philosophical development with his adherence to Aquinas and Aristotle. The essay is structured as a discourse which engages his principal opponents; seeking to represent the most cogent elements of their theories, while showing their limitations and how the Thomist Aristotelian account of practical reasoning he espouses overcome those limitations. As such it is a fitting summation of his life's work.

There is, however, another and deeper level at which MacIntyre is operating. The most engaging (and purposely so) part of the book comes in chapter five when MacIntyre provides a narrative of four disparate twentieth century individuals (the Russian author Vasily Grossman, the US Supreme Court judge Sandra Day O'Connor, the Trinidadian journalist C.L.R. James and the Irish priest Denis Faul). He does not provide standard biographies, but analyses how these four individuals acted as practical reasoners. MacIntyre's purpose is to connect the general with the particular, so that the more abstract reflections which occupy the first four chapters are given flesh in the lives of these individuals. This

is more than just providing examples for those who may struggle to grasp more abstract philosophical ideas; MacIntyre's contention is that moral theology needs literature. These particular histories are thus not to be understood as merely the application of general principles, for it is only through their application in real lives that we come to understand those principles. Yet MacIntyre is not advocating that philosophy and literature merge, thus in his choice and use of these examples the concerns of the philosopher are dominant. The particular, nevertheless, matters and through it MacIntyre places in question the notion that a philosopher is in total control of her own ideas. What we remember, even of our own thought, is only a partial grasp of the truth we seek.

Perhaps it would be better to say *especially* of our own thought. One of MacIntyre's central contentions is that others, and in particular our friends, know us better than we know ourselves. The book focuses on narrative, but this should not be seen to imply a retreat from MacIntyre's central thesis in *Dependent Rational Animals*. The animal dependencies he stresses in that earlier work are now spelt out in the structure of rational agency, with an account of how friendship is essential for rational action. Without friends we cannot deliberate over the things that are of greatest importance in our lives, and we are most accountable to those with whom we share the most. In his biographical sketch of Denis Faul, MacIntyre's friendship with a man he greatly admired is evident, but the whole essay is an invitation to friendly conversation, to finding common ground with those whom he writes about, and with those who read him. MacIntyre is conscious that his readers are not typical twenty-first century folk, but are part of a small group that read such works on moral theory. His narrative is not aimed at providing slogans which will reach the masses, but is an exercise in friendship, prompting us to reflect on our own theories and practices, whilst at the same inviting us to assess his own claims.

How successful the work will be as an exercise in friendship remains to be seen. For those who already share many of MacIntyre's commitments the essay will speak most clearly to what they hold dear. Others who work within the Thomist Aristotelian world may be critical of his particular reading and development of that tradition, whilst still finding a great deal of common ground. Philosophers of differing modern traditions will find a great deal to object to, not least the ending of the book which spells out something implicit throughout: that philosophy leaves off where theology begins. Yet any philosopher concerned with the basic questions of human life will find some common ground with MacIntyre, enabling some level of discussion to take place. Yet I suspect that MacIntyre's main concern is not with any of these groups, but with those who lack the resources to make sense of their lives in the conditions of modernity. We are overwhelmed with information, but remember so little of our past: of where we come from and where we are going. We have vast knowledge of the human animal, but are disconnected from

our animality. The commodification of our lives has brought a loss of memory more widespread and lasting than anything Stalin could achieve in his attempts to re-write history. MacIntyre's essay is a work written in hope. The hope that human beings have a future: a hope engendered through friendship and given birth in the fragility of our human nature.

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MUSIC, THEOLOGY, AND JUSTICE edited by Michael O'Connor, Hyun-Ah Kim, and Christina Labriola, *Lexington Books*, Lanham, 2017, pp. xxi+228, £70.00, hbk

Why music and justice? (Theology goes without saying.) Until early modernity, temperance was the paramount virtue in musical ethics, but now we look for justice. Since making music (or 'musicking') is inherently social, justice is implicated, first, in the personal relationships between music-makers (and audiences), who need patience, attentiveness, and intersubjective empathy. Thus, 'good musicking' is 'a school of virtue'. Musicking is also formative for social life, including political engagement, community building and liturgical worship. Thirdly, both the content and context of musical performances can directly promote justice, be they protest songs at a political march or hymns in church.

This theologically rich and sensitive volume is the fruit of an international conference held at the University of St Michael's College, in the University of Toronto, in October 2014. The dauntingly wide intersection of music, theology and justice is intelligently approached through the Christological titles of Prophet (or teacher), Pastor (or king) and Priest. Music enables individuals and communities to bear prophetic witness to God's kingdom, eschatologically present, albeit imperfectly. Music builds community and fosters awareness of our shared humanity. Music mediates between heaven and earth, both in real liturgies and (arguably) in quasi-sacramental secular contexts. These Prophetic, Pastoral and Priestly roles for music are helpfully surveyed in the editors' Introduction and the summary essays concluding each part. Such a structure provides a powerful interpretive tool, bringing coherence to an otherwise highly diverse collection ranging from medieval chant to extreme metal music. That said, one can identify other persistent themes – harmony, bridge-building, bodiliness, eschatology – that further enhance the coherence of this volume.

To distinguish itself from noise, all music depends on some organising principle. Order and justice invite musical metaphors. As Shakespeare's Ulysses warns, 'Take but degree away, untune that string,/ And, hark, what discord follows!' Several contributors uphold music's potential to integrate, join together, harmonise. Conversely, Satan in St Hildegard's