

'Christian': an astonished awakening to an Agapeic Creator God who is the source, sustainer, and gratuitous giver of being, who is the guarantor of its intelligibility, and whose prevenient summons from and to Transcendence capacitates our responsive questioning-turned-quest. In which case, Duns's work might be characterized as a theologically oriented and consummated metaphysical meditation aimed at the spiritual-existential appropriation of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*. For, as Duns himself notes, '*creatio ex nihilo* is not an arid statement of fact but a condensed exclamation of wonder at being at all...it is a passage, a mystagogical opening, enticing us into a rekindled sense of awe' (p.198).

Duns was roused into action by what he terms Charles Taylor's 'Narnian insight': just as the children in Lewis's *Chronicles* cannot enter Narnia through the same door a second time, so too have pathways to transcendence accessible in ages past become obscured or obstructed in our secular age (p.38). By the end of his formative, informative, and performative text, Duns hopes the reader comes to see that, metaxologically perceived, being itself is this door to Narnia, a door constitutively cracked open and through which the Agapeic Other calls to us. Through undertaking these spiritual exercises, Duns hopes that they be graced with the eyes to see and the ears to hear.

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ALASDAIR MACINTYRE: AN INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY by Émile Perreau-Saussine, translated by Nathan J. Pinkoski, *University of Notre Dame Press*, 2022, pp. 228, \$40.00, hbk

Originally published in 2005, Anglophone audiences have eagerly awaited Pinkoski's translation of Perreau-Saussine's (1972-2010) prize-winning biography of Alasdair MacIntyre (1929-). Termed specifically *An Intellectual Biography*, Perreau-Saussine's text competently negotiates the complex tapestry of MacIntyre's critical engagement with the intellectual components of liberalism and individualism, antiliberalism and communitarianism, while relating this discussion to his varied personal history of association with the British Communist party in the 1940s, the New Left in the 1950s, Trotskyism in the 1960s, before converting to Catholicism in 1983 where 'he ended up a disciple of Thomas Aquinas' (p.10).

Pinkoski's translation follows an initial English translation by Perreau-Saussine of a section of the book and it is understood that a full working translation was a task considered by the author before his death in

2010. Perreau-Saussine's other work includes *Catholicisme et démocratie: Une histoire de la pensée politique* (2011), published posthumously and quickly translated into English in 2012. Interest in his research continues to exist through the *Prix Émile Perreau-Saussine*, sustained by his family as an initiative aimed at encouraging scholars aged under 40 years, reflecting the youthful loss of Perreau-Saussine aged 37 years.

Why study MacIntyre? Perreau-Saussine's answer to this question reveals a personal as well as a general concern. He argues that the commitment to a study of MacIntyre provides a 'very clear understanding of the intellectual history of the second half of the twentieth century' (p.10); that it is important to stay with the thinker across decades even as it is an uncomfortable and disorientating, enriching and inspiring, experience since '[h]is trajectory enables us to take another look at a great part of the history of the intellectual opposition to bourgeois individualism' (p.11). Perreau-Saussine comes to MacIntyre precisely through his opposition to liberalism and the tensions therein, perceiving this as an entanglement to be attentive to rather than anticipating a neatly formed answer to the challenges that liberalism and individualism create.

Thematically divided into three chapters *An Intellectual Biography* interrelates politics, philosophy and theology. Within each chapter the development of MacIntyre's thought is considered contextually in a way that enables readers to plot something of his intellectual development, although it covers far more than intellectual formation. Choosing to present the material thematically is a wise decision because a chronological consideration might mask what Perreau-Saussine terms an embarrassment of 'flip-flops' (p.10) between positions that ultimately are shown by the author to unite around an 'anti-individualism' (p.11) and a criticism of liberalism. Even across personal shifts in political, philosophical and theological reasoning and practice, MacIntyre's challenge to liberalism remains a constant and his skill is found not necessarily in 'originality of his thought' (p.159) so much as in 'assuredly' offering 'a corrective to our ways of thinking about' (p.159) political questions, which broaden into philosophical and theological questions.

This overlapping of the political, philosophical and theological is, at times, a source of frustration and disappointment for the author, who muses that 'MacIntyre tends too much to conceive of the history of philosophy as the history of moral philosophy, to the detriment of political philosophy' (p.158). For Perreau-Saussine, liberalism and individualism require a political handling in philosophy that includes, but is not limited to, a moral philosophy otherwise the difficulties of individualism are exposed in a 'reaction that takes away real freedom' (p.158).

To cite a case in point, the author notes how MacIntyre 'tends too much to neglect civic virtue and to relate moral virtue only to subpolitical or transpolitical "communities"' that are expressly understood as 'religious communities in particular' (p.159). Returning to Aristotelian

thought about the good through the lens of Thomas Aquinas, MacIntyre leans upon the development of virtue (perhaps largely civic dressed as moral) outside the authority and influence of the political state. Indeed, Perreau-Saussine regards 'community and tradition as illusory substitutes for political life' (p.126) in MacIntyre's writings, which is disappointing to him because '[t]he demands of the life of the soul and of communal life are often only reconciled within the framework of a liberal regime' (p.158). Simply put, the kind of analysis that MacIntyre demonstrates occurs most effectively within the 'liberal regime' he seeks to contest. It is here that the author's voice comes through most clearly and it is testament to his scholarship that his personal commentary features more heavily in the epilogue, allowing MacIntyre's thought to determine the overall narrative.

More broadly, MacIntyre's suspicion of the nation state or the political sphere as an apparatus that bends or mends human will into something less destructive is not only grounded in his reappraisal of an Aristotelian notion of the good, as desirable and articulated in sociality, but is also partly his response to the 'cruelty of the twentieth century' that cannot only be redressed by applying other 'techniques of government, a sort of constitutional engineering' (p.156). Too much is asked of the political and MacIntyre finds community and tradition, instead, to be 'anchoring points' in the 'abysses' (p.33) opened up by an exaggerated and unhinged individualism.

It is a curious argument because on the one hand, MacIntyre maintains that the 'separation between (private) morality and politics is untenable' (p.104) and, on the other hand, that the political is not deemed the privileged placeholder of the moral by the philosopher. What is urgently felt, though, is the 'misery of a self separated from every tradition' (p.132), that is remedied not by further flexing the muscle of a political state as the sole guarantor of 'social life' (p.103) as an artificial construct, but instead in a practical reason that draws from the twofold 'desire to live in society and...to know God' (p.148). Where MacIntyre sees too much being asked of the political (where freedom is derived through constructs), Perreau-Saussine sees too much being asked of the religious (where freedom is derived from an innate desire for sociality). Summarising the dynamic astutely, the author posits that 'while Marx reduced politics to economics, MacIntyre tends to reduce politics to religion' (p.124).

Ultimately, however, there is scope within MacIntyre's thought for other forms of collective reasoning given that his concept of traditions and communities is inclusive of, but not solely determined by, religion. These traditions and communities give 'substance' to, and 'develop', rather than exclude 'practical reason' (p.102), enabling the individual to escape individualism through the mediation of a 'party, city, or church' (p.70). These traditions and communities are to be directed towards the good, while also sustaining a capacity to hold that community or tradition to account. Rather than seeing politics as reduced to a religious end in the desire to know God, for example, it is this religious end that helps open up what is termed the political to the task of responding to the 'desire to live in

society'. MacIntyre's position by 2005 recognises that 'it is in the context of the city that men become what they are' (p.106) and, therefore, the misery of separation from traditions and communities is alleviated by the relish of association and belonging whereby an individual participates in collective reasoning. As a brief glance at MacIntyre's intellectual history reveals, MacIntyre certainly has taken up the struggle to associate and belong across a myriad of traditions.

Reading MacIntyre's biography in the decades after it was first published, a poignant tone remains because while MacIntyre's work continues, researchers and general readers will not have Perreau-Saussine's sharp focus and impressive perseverance to accompany them.

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