

# Alasdair MacIntyre:

## *Ethics in the Conflicts of Modernity*

Zoom Discussion Group, Wednesdays 5-6 PM; Hilary Term 2022

for The Las Casas Institute, Blackfriars Hall, Oxford University

Leaders: Edward Hadas and James Bergida

*Note on readings:* The long readings are recommended for those who have time and desire, but the discussion will be centred entirely on the short readings, which are numbered to help identify them in discussion.

The quotes are there to help you find the sections. They contain the first and last words of the short readings. Each short reading starts at the beginning of a paragraph and finishes at the end of one. (In some cases, the last sentence or two are transitions to subsequent topics. They can be ignored.)

### **Week 1: Expressivism and its discontents:**

**Long Readings:** Sections 1.1-1.3; 1.5-1.7; 1.9

**Short Readings:** a) pages 9-10: "To ask what reasons...this or that good." b) pages 14-16: "What we need to do next...nature of such disagreements." c) pages 22-24: "When two people disagree...such account I now turn". [end of section 3]; d) pages 32-33: "Suppose that someone...that I have described" e) pages 34-35: "We have then before us...are to be resolved."; f) pages 43-43: "Morality has on this view...the things that we love"."

### **Week 2: NeoAristotelianism: human flourishing and prudence**

**Long Readings:** Sections 1.4, 1.8; 2.1-2.3; [2.4-27 on Marx]

**Short Readings:** Sections a) pages 24-25: "The concept central to...will have to emerge later."); b) pages 27-29: "Go further afield to, say...justly be called *eudaemon*"; c) pages 49-54: "We do so, as...to be the best possible life for us"; d) page 57: "Return now to our imagined...or left unfinished?"; e) pages 74-75: "Reflexive practical agents thus...of these sources of error."; f) pages 76-77 (one paragraph): "I remarked earlier...our own culture"; pages 84-85: "What Hume's account leaves wholly...moral and political understanding" [end of section]; g) pages 89-90: "It is, however, the teacher of those...lack good reason to desire".

### **Week 3: The creation and failure of Morality I**

**Long Readings:** Sections 1.10; 3.1-3.4

**Short Readings:** a) pages 64-66: "To think this is from...whether substantive or metaethical"; b) pages 67-68: "This need, interestingly, is felt...that culture's moral condition"; c) pages 114-117: [From beginning of section] "Expressivism is, as we noted...for both sides in each debate"; d) pages 124-126: [beginning of section] "The story of modern politics...grotesquely unequal ways"; e) pages 127-128: "Market relations too are...economics of advanced modernity".

### **Week 4: The creation and failure of Morality II**

**Long Readings:** Sections 3.5-3.9

**Short Readings:** a) [from beginning through the end of the section] pages 133-136: "The culture of modernity are...to say what it is"; b) page 138 (one paragraph): "I have presented Morality...social

and cultural order”; c) All of section 3.7 (pages 138-141); d) pages 147-149: “Lawrence invites us now, as...is notably less successful”.

### **Week 5: The modern predicament and the Thomistic-Aristotelian method**

**Long Readings:** Sections 4.1-4.2; 4.4-4.8

**Short Readings:** a) [from beginning of section] pages 168-170: “The concept of a common good, as...workplaces, schools, government”; b) pages 174-176: “Schools then resemble families...society that no longer exists” [end of section]; c) pages 183-184: “In a culture informed by...Satisficers are sophisticated maximisers”; d) pages 187-189: “A second feature of what...elaborated by Aristotle and Aquinas” [end of section]; e) [from beginning of section] pages 189-191: “An agent who acts as...enriched by more recent findings.”; f) pages 197-199: “This suggests a first thesis, that...but that is not always so.”; g) page 201 [one paragraph]: “First, to be happy...for feeling as they do”.

### **Week 6: The debate with Williams and the importance of narrative**

**Long Readings:** Sections 3.10-3.11; 4.10-4.11; 4.3; 4.12-4.13

**Short Readings:** *Williams:* a) pages 150-152 [from beginning of section]: “No summary can do justice...some single theoretical stance; b) pages 154-156: “The reader is then through both...or that particular self”; c) page 157 [one paragraph]: “What they would have to...is such a thing possible?”; d) Summary section! pages 214-217: [from beginning of section] “That in our society families...party brings to the encounter”; e) pages 221-226: “Is Aristotle’s account of moral and...do I agree with Williams?”

*Narrative:* a) page 54: “Reflective agents thus increasingly...of all our failures”; b) pages 218-219: “How agents view other...needs to be learned”; c) pages 228-231: “Here we have to revisit...deprived by that death”; d) pages 231-233: [beginning of section] “In evaluating a life what...about storytelling were true.”

### **Week 7: One of the four narratives in Chapter 5**

### **Weeks 8: Another one of the four narratives in Chapter 5**