I. Review of *After Virtue*

II. Aristotle or Nietzsche?

III. MacIntyre’s History, In Brief

IV. MacIntyre’s Three-Stage Account of Virtue
Overview of *After Virtue*

**Ch’s 1-3:** Where We Are Now: Emotivism as a Philosophical Theory and as a Social Condition

**Ch’s 4-6:** History of the Failure of the Enlightenment Project, and How it Led to Emotivism

**Ch’s 7 & 8:** Critiques of Managerialism (i.e., applied emotivism)

**Ch. 9:** The crux – Premodern Virtue or Emotivism?

**Ch’s 10-13:** History of Premodern Virtue

**Ch’s 14 & 15:** MacIntyre’s Own Account of Virtue

**Ch’s 16 & 17:** The degeneration of virtue today

**Ch. 18:** The Closing of his Argument
Nietzsche or Aristotle?

Three Alternatives:

1. **The Enlightenment Project**: Ethics can be provided with a rational, secular foundation based on an account of human nature – *Rationalism, Modernism*

2. **Nietzsche**: Ethics is nothing but a disguise for individual assertions of will – *Emotivism, Post-modernism*

3. **Aristotle**: Ethics is grounded on some conception of human *telos* – *Aristotelianism, Pre-modernism, Anti-modernism*

   MacIntyre rejects (1).

**Project**: To vindicate the Aristotelian tradition against Nietzsche and Emotivism.
MacIntyre’s History of Virtue

**Point**: To trace the development of the virtues, so as to reveal common features that run through the tradition.

**Stages:**

1. **The Heroic Tradition**

   self = social role
   virtues allow for success in one’s role
   agôn = contest
   action determines motives
   no conflicts among virtues
2. Classical Athens

self = citizen of a city-state (*polis*)

virtues determined by place in *polis*

motives not entirely discerned in action

conflicting roles → conflicts among virtues

a. The Sophists
    virtues ensure success in actual *polis*

b. Plato
    virtues ensure success in *ideal* *polis*
    virtues are in harmony

c. Sophocles
    virtues are of a citizen with multiple roles
    virtues can conflict, as roles conflict

d. Aristotle
    virtues are of a man
    man is by nature one who lives in a *polis*
    need good fortune, habituation
    virtues are in harmony
MacIntyre’s Account of Virtues

Three Stages:

1. A Practice.

“By a ‘practice’ I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended” (187).

Key Concepts:

- complex activities
- internal goods
- standards of excellence

- definitive standards
- extending conceptions of ends and goods
Contrasts

Internal vs. External Goods
Practices vs. Technical Skills
Practices vs. Institutions

First Account of Virtue:
“A virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable use to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods” (191).

Problems:
• Possibility of evil practices
• Problem of disharmony in a human life
• Lack of balance, proportion (Gauguin)

Human life must be understood in narrative form.

Actions only make sense as part of some possible narrative.

The narrative form for human life is a quest.

**Second Account of Virtues:**

“The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good” (219).
3. A Life Lived Within A Tradition.

Our identities are largely constituted by our roles.

Therefore, what is good for us depends on our roles.

“… we approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity. I am someone’s son or daughter, someone else’s cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this claim, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles” (220).
Third Account of the Virtues:

“The virtues find their point and purpose not only in sustaining those relationships necessary if the variety of goods internal to practices are to be achieved and not only in sustaining the form of an individual life in which that individual may seek out his or her good as the good of his or her whole life, but also in sustaining those traditions which provide both practices and individual lives with their necessary historical context” (223).
Thoreau, *Walden*:

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately...”
Next Week: Idleness

No Class Meetings, No Work Due.

Instead, *Live Deliberately*.

Monday, May 18: Turn in a one-page account of what you did with this time, why, and what good it furthered.