I. MacIntyre’s Position and Method

II. Overview of *After Virtue*

III. Emotivism as Philosophy and Social Condition
MacIntyre’s Position and Method

“We possess … simulacra of morality…. But we have … lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality” (2).

A Historical Position:

- A position about not just philosophy but our society and the philosophy it embodies
- Concerns our society at a historical moment
- Concerns our society as resulting from a historical sequence (narrative)

The Historical Narrative

1st: The language and practice of morality flourished.

2nd: Morality in society suffered a catastrophe

3rd: The language and practice of morality were restored in damaged form.
Some Features of MacIntyre’s Method

MacIntyre views philosophical theories and positions in relation to their social context.

Cf. his criticism of the “persistently unhistorical treatment of moral philosophy” (11)

MacIntyre views philosophical theories as developing historically, along with the historical development of societies.

Cf. his discussion of emotivism, ch. 3.

Central to MacIntyre’s project is the construction of a historical narrative that makes sense of the philosophical development that has brought us here.
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
Emotivism as a Philosophy and as a Social Condition

A Theory of the meaning of moral language

Meaning:
Ordinarily:
“cat” means $\rightarrow$ (Hand-drawn
“red” means $\rightarrow$ pictures were
“mat” means $\rightarrow$ here — you
“The cat is on there... )
the red mat” means $\rightarrow$
What do “good,” “bad,” “right,” “wrong” mean?

According to emotivism, they don’t mean anything.

What do these sentences mean?

“Go geoducks!”

“Close the door!”

“Ugh.”

They don’t mean anything – they merely express various emotions or preferences.

“Stealing is wrong.”

“Stealing – rrr…”

“You were wrong to steal that money.”

“Rrr… you stole that money!”

“Gandhi was a good man.”

“Ahh, Gandhi… hm-mmm…”
Problems with Emotivism

• Fails to distinguish between *meaning* and *use*

• Fails to account for the justificatory structure of moral language.

“You should’ve gone and helped Sal move.”

“Why should I have?”

“Well, you promised to, and you should keep your promises. Besides that, Sal needed your help, Sal’s your friend, and you should help your friends.”
Emotivism as a Social Condition

An Important Feature of Emotivism:

Ordinary views of morality (like Kant, p. 23) distinguish between manipulating someone and not doing so, by giving them moral reasons.

Emotivism claims that all moral language is manipulative. So, all our social relations are manipulative.

So, what does an emotivist society look like?

According to MacIntyre: Like ours!

Cf. p. 25-27.

And, looking ahead, p. 74.