MacIntyre, Alasdair, *A Short History of Ethics*. First Edition: New York: 1966; Second Edition: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998.

Alasdair MacIntyre (1929 - ____) converted to Roman Catholicism in the early 1980s. McIntyre believes that most modern moral disputes derive from incompatible premises. Because of this, one cannot mediate the disputes, but only choose a position among them. McIntyre defends Thomistic Aristotelianism as the best ethical structure to date, with its emphasis on virtues. "Thomism" refers to Thomas Aquinas, who elaborated medieval Christian theology on a backbone of Aristotelian philosophy.

Preface. MacIntyre considers the thirty years of criticism of this text, and expresses multiple points at which he has himself become dissatisfied with the text. He would make substantial changes to the chapters on Christianity, his exclusion of Maimonides and Islamic ethicists, and weak treatment of Aquinas. He would also make changes to his treatment of British philosophers and Kant and Hare. MacIntyre reaffirms his commitment to an expressly Aristotelian ethics.

Preface to First Edition. He notes that the book suffers from its author having too many goals for the text.

Chapter 1: The Philosophical Point of the History of Ethics. Moral concepts arise from and help shape human social life. Philosophy alters concepts, which may alter conduct. No history of morality can be philosophically neutral, contra Ayer.

Chapter 2: The Prephilosophical History of "Good" and the Transition to Philosophy. In Homer, the good king is the successful king, that is, the king who is clever and prevails in battle. The "good" is pre-reflective; there exists no gap between fact and evaluation. In Theognis of Megara, virtue is divorced from social function. The Persian conflict culturally traumatized Greece. Since the Persians live by different rules, are the rules inconstant? Are any rules invariant? Thus enters the philosopher, analyzing concepts. The philosopher criticizes the moralist, but their tasks overlap.

Chapter 3: The Sophists and Socrates. Sophists taught that a virtuous citizen functions well in his city. To excel as a citizen requires influencing others, and that technique is the province of sophists (rhetoric). European philosophy followed the sophists by creating the "natural man" who acts from fear or desire, and from whom to protect themselves weaker men form social compacts. The "natural man" concept suffers "fatal internal incoherence." He learns rhetoric from sophists because winning popular approval precedes taking advantage. Socrates battled sophistry, asserting he made his auditors wiser by exposing to them their ignorance. Provoking rage may drive a person to moral reflection, when lesser disturbances fail to achieve that result. Aristotle criticized Socrates's view of moral reflection as thinking about virtue, not creating it.

Chapter 4: Plato: The Gorgias. No historical Socrates can be unambiguously derived from Plato's accounts. The techniques of persuasion are morally relevant, according to Socrates. In the *Gorgias*, Plato argues that the good involves observing a limit, since boundless desire is by definition incapable of satisfaction. The limit is rules governing behavior, which behaviors are practiced in community. The bad man cannot "share a common life" with others.

Chapter 5: Plato: The Republic. In the *Republic*, Socrates requests a definition of justice. No list of behaviors suffices, since we seek the characteristics that gave rise to the list itself. Plato traces justice in the state, then the soul. In the state, justice is the proper functioning of society's classes: artisans/laborers, soldiers, and rulers. In the soul, these classes are mirrored: appetite, spirit, and reason. Justice consists in each part performing its proper role. Plato is pessimistic about political life. The *Republic* delineates four increasingly imperfect divergences from the ideal state Plato described: timocratic (Sparta), oligarchy (Corinth), democracy (Athens), and tyranny (Syracuse). Just life is most threatened, not by crass injustice, but by the disciplined man who moderates today's vice to insure tomorrow's. Justice is incomprehensible to the masses, who live "justly," if at all, only because of non-rational pressures. Plato tended to lose sight of the fact that justice is normative, describing what out to be, not what is.

Chapter 6: Postscript to Plato. Plato's morals and politics interweave. In the *Symposium*, Plato describes the man who comes to pursue beauty itself, not merely beautiful

things. He presupposes an educational system proceeding from the top (rulers who see the Forms) down. Plato encounters serious problems in Forms theory with the infinite regress of the Third Man argument (as found in the *Parmenides*). He retreats from Forms theory in the *Laws*, advocating universal inculcation of virtue, even to the common man. The Divine was elevated, and religion becomes a vehicle to promote virtue. But rulers should reach virtue by reason alone. Plato's virtuous state was totalitarian.

Chapter 7: Aristotle's Ethics. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* analyze the science of human happiness. The "good" is that at which one aims. Finding goodness, one achieves *eudemonia*, which is badly translated "happiness." Eudemonia means not only subjective well-feeling, but also faring well in life. A good man acts virtuously throughout life. Intellectual virtues (wisdom, prudence) grow from natural ability and express instruction. Moral virtue grows from training oneself in habits. Virtuous moral choices seek the mean, understood as the choice that avoids opposite extremes. For example, courage is the mean between the one error of cowardice and the opposite error of foolhardiness. This schematization is not entirely coherent. The virtues advocated are Greek upper-class values, which Aristotle approves, and he never asks the question, Why these values and not others? Actions embody principles. Humans are rational only in the sense that their actions are to be judged against the standard of a person who carefully and rationally deliberates before acting. As a factual matter, most human actions are voluntary but irrational, because the actor fails to deliberate. The deliberative person has *phronesis*, practiced intelligence, which is the capacity for turning principles into meaningful action. Moral failure is a problem for Aristotle's thought because he thinks people do what seems best to them. This position fails to account for much of what occurs in human moral endeavor—that is, failure and moral turpitude. One point of having principles is to point out and suggest remediation for moral shortcomings. Aristotle conflates virtues essential to any human society with others contingent upon a specific society or individual. The "great-souled man," (so reminiscent of Nietzsche's eagles) asks much and deserves much. He stands above obligations. Society exists to admire him and offer a stage upon which he can display himself. He offends others, but only intentionally. This is an odd virtue. Aristotle fails in his concept of justice to grapple with the fact that laws frequently arise from forces other than virtue. Friendships always exists, according to Aristotle, for a reason. He misses the core fact that intimate friendship exists for itself, as an end in itself. Aristotle's virtues tell one how to behave while reaching one's goal, but fails to tell one what goals are worthy of pursuit. Aristotle is taken with pleasure as an ultimate goal, but rejects it. The ultimate goal of human existence is contemplation of metaphysical truths, and the high water mark of the human tide is a competent philosopher with a sustaining income. So, Aristotle's ethics boil down to an ethics for the few at leisure, which is a disappointing outcome for so great a mind.

Chapter 8: Postscript to Greek Ethics. Modern ethics asks, What must I do to do right? Greek ethics asked, What must I do to fare well? In modern ethics, desire is divorced from the right. To do well while doing right sullies right behavior with purportedly conflicted motivations. One should do one's duty, according to modern ethics, regardless whether one will do well. In the end, modern ethics makes the issue of the good in human action unintelligible. The question becomes unconnected to human desire. If one can determine the good for man, then there necessarily is some criterion for judging among competing answers as to what constitutes the human good(s). We should understand the progression of the concept of good from its ancient to modern forms historically, and not in terms of opposition. The ancient, historically, became the modern. The "good" in Greek thought related to adequately performing a societal function in a Greek polis. As the modern state arose, first in Macedon, then in Rome, the ideal of the good was divorced from its local roots. The good came to refer to man in whatever circumstance he was embedded, rather than man embedded in the particular circumstance of a Greek city-state, and goodness came to refer to more generalized characteristics of that embedded person than merely the quality of his or her actions in the appointed social role. Still, even in its modern context, "good" indicates something more than mere personal approval or choice, or even use of the term for propagandistic purposes. The good indicates that any person wanting something when positioned in a circumstance similar to that of the speaker would reasonably choose that item to which the term "good" was applied. "Good" indicates a "norm for choice." Are we not ultimately doomed to moral relativism? No. Some structures of society are necessary, regardless of which society we discuss: truth-telling, rule-following, language, equity. Virtue instructs one how to

pursue ends; happiness instructs one what ends to pursue. The two concepts are interlinked, but not identical. The rise of the large state changed the ethos of morality. The individual is seen as a citizen of the cosmos, not the city-state. Such an individual describes himself or herself in terms of the universe, which turns out to be an impoverished rubric, as compared to the rich language of complaint and commendation available to the person embedded in a small community. Stoicism and Epicureanism, while outwardly opposed to one another, end up advocating these "cosmic" moralities in the Greco-Roman world. Stoicism places the individual as part of a world-god, repeating endlessly the necessary events of existence cyclically. That person is to recognize and assent to his role, avoiding pleasure to fulfill duty. The Epicurean sees the world mechanistically and without a god. Seek pleasure, the Epicurean advises, but beware of ill-conceived pleasures. They lead to pain. Moderate pleasures to maximize pleasure. Stoicism and Epicureanism spoke to the alienated and uncertain Roman with sufficient funds to survive. It lay to Christianity to speak to the slaves and poor.

   Chapter 9: Christianity. Durkheim's key question regarding societies was, What is holy to whom? His question, however, does not apply to religions that survive their birthing civilizations. Such religions exhibit a capacity for adaptation to new peoples and circumstances. This is the problem with Christianity: its morality has taken multiple forms—pre-patristic eschatological, Roman proletarian, post-Constantinian bureaucratic, medieval feudalistic, middle European reform, Protestant fragmentism, and post-Christian retrenchment. What is Christian morality, given these multiple incarnations of it? The nut of Christianity lies in this: the paternity of God fractured by man's failure to obey God, and subsequent estrangement from that familial relationship. Christian morality argues one should obey God because he is holy, good, and powerful. God's power guarantees that justice shall prevail eventually, even if justice fitfully emerges in the present. Christian morality is paradoxical because it attempts to prescribe for society on the basis of exhortations delivered to tiny communities and individuals, all expecting the imminent end of the age. But the Kingdom did not come. So Christian moralists have looked to other thinkers for the backbone of Christian morals: Paul to Stoicism, Anselm to feudal hierarchies, Augustine to Plato, and Aquinas to Aristotle. With William of Occam arrives fideism that characterizes the Reformation moralists. Human corruption dramatically incapacitates human reason. We receive salvation by faith alone, and obey merely because God commands it. [MacIntyre makes corrections to this section at Preface to Second Edition, page ix.]

   Chapter 10: Luther, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Spinoza. Luther and Machiavelli elevate the individual, Luther in theology and Machiavelli in political theory. **Luther's** theology focused on the individual's relationship with God, emphasizing Occam's position that we are saved solely by grace, all apart from understanding or works. Luther isolated the realm of salvation to the ecclesiastical and/or timeless sphere of man-before-his-God, leaving the secular realm its own realm of absolute authority. **Calvin**, like Luther, emphasized the individual, but did not leave the government to the authorities, at least wherever the secular and religious overlapped. But even for Calvin, the economic realm was left to the political and economic order. J. N. Figgis characterized the period by saying that the Absolute Individual came face to face with the Absolute State. A transition from status to contract, from the medieval order to the individual acting in his own interest via contract, begins. **Machiavelli** argues that the goals of political and social life lie in the acquisition of power. Moral rules are merely technical opinions about how to achieve that end. All men are corrupt, and contracts may be broken, since all men will break their contracts under some circumstances. Actions are to be judged solely by their consequences. Moral maxims exist to influence others. Human nature is unchanging over time, and political institutions are forever in flux. **Hobbes** seeks to reduce political theory to Euclidean simplicity. The axioms are the individual, who seeks power and fears death, leading to a war of every individual against all. To avoid death, individual contract to release their sovereignty to a king who protects them, but is himself subject to no higher authority. Hobbes's king is a mortal God. Hobbes's original social contract is confused, since a contract presupposes preexisting rules and standards within which a contract is formed. Hobbes's ethics shows clearly that a moral theory is dependent upon the theory of human nature that informs it. For Hobbes, the state exists to restrain disaster only. For **Spinoza**, however, the state exists to maximize human goods, not merely to forestall savagery. Spinoza argues that God is Nature and all events are determined. He attempts to "geometrize" ethics with the goal of helping the confused individual (which includes all men

but himself) see the inevitability of their circumstance. One should ignore as much as possible the geometrical pretenses of Spinoza's ethics. What is important about Spinoza's ethics is that, unlike Hobbes, he sees human emotions and desires as remediable. One can become a person molding himself, if properly instructed, and part of an enlightened state that helps its citizens. Spinoza emphasizes freedom and reason, which makes him the first modern thinker.

Chapter 11: **New Values**. Three answers have been considered so far relating to the logical underpinning of moral rules: 1) the Greek, that human life tends by training to pursue certain goods, 2) the Christian, that God commands obedience and punishes disobedience, and 3) the sophists or Hobbes, that one must weigh which action will produce most of what we want now. The Greek view is superior. Hobbes's view fails to consider the possibility that the joy experienced by evil person in doing their evil may outweigh the misery experienced by those to whom evil is done. Christianity bears its massive metaphysical burden, and requires belief that justice awaits another life. The new values question the legitimacy of the medieval status quo, and argue that natural law grants to every man certain freedoms, freedoms that cannot be abrogated by government or individuals apart from the individual's consent. The Diggers (economic, especially land, communism) and Levelers (private property communism) iterated this view. The claim of natural rights says that unless one enters a contract with a government or person, and that government or person fulfills their end of the bargain, then no person or state has the right to impede one's basic freedoms. Therefore, a social contract in some form is essential to legitimate government, and most of government's claims of authority are groundless.

Chapter 12: The British Eighteenth-Century Argument. **Locke's** presocial man is not presocial at all. His social contract exists to safeguard our property rights, as well as other natural rights. My property is that created by my labor. If I have surplus, I may purchase the property of others. Therefore, economic classes are inevitable. Locke bases society on tacit consent to the social contract, which MacIntyre takes to be fallacious. Locke believes that moral propositions can be proved, in the manner of mathematics. Good causes pleasure or diminishes pain; evil the opposite. Henry **More** sets out what he takes to be twenty-three self-evident moral principles. The **Earl of Shaftesbury** argues against reason in favor of moral sense. Bernard de **Mandeville** (The Fable of the Bees) argues against moral sense. Private self-interested action tends to create the public good. Francis **Hutcheson** also advocated moral sense theory, making benevolence the core feeling, and coined the famous proto-utilitarian dictum: "that nation is best which procures the greatest happiness for the greatest numbers, and that worst which in like manner occasions misery." Joseph **Butler** argued against Hutcheson's use of benevolence, because it leads to present action being guided by the future happiness of mankind, which is insufficiently determinate. Self-love and benevolence are not opposed. One must guide action by cool, reasonable self-love. All of these thinkers struggle with the concept of happiness, since its societal roots have been demolished and replaced by an incipient psychology. The problem is that happiness cannot serve as the essential moral term because frequently what we ought to do does not serve to make us happy. David **Hume** argues for moral sense, and that reason is the handmaiden of feeling. Feelings, not reason, move one to action. Reason stands enslaved to emotions and desires. Hume's Law asserts that no set of factual premises can entail an evaluative conclusion. This is patently false: consider the factual statement, The house in which you are sitting is on fire, or the mushroom you are about to eat is poisonous. Imperatives differ from ought-statements, first, because ought-statements imply a reason for their strictures, and because ought-statements apply to a class of persons and circumstances, whereas imperatives are mere interpersonal communications. It is ambiguous whether Hume intended to preclude progressions for is-to-ought *per se*, because the passage bears other interpretations, and Hume's own thought proceeds from is to ought. Richard **Price** argues, contra Hume and the moral sense ethicists, that ought cannot derive from feelings, because one can always ask, Ought I to feel like this? Adam **Smith**, also a moral sense theorist, sets sympathy as the basis of morality, and uses Hume's imaginary impartial spectator as the judge of our individual actions. Scottish successors to Hume achieved little, because the problems they faced were insoluble. McIntyre argues that common sense commingles past wisdom with ancient confusions, and so provides little clarity.

Chapter 13: The French Eighteenth-Century Argument. **Montesquieu** saw that societies are not aggregations of individuals, but independent entities themselves, influencing and being influenced by individuals. The lawgiver must study his society to know what laws are

appropriate. He must know the "spirit of the laws." One must have a society to make an individual comprehensible. He repudiated moral precepts applicable to all persons at all times, and yet (inconsistently) believed in certain eternal moral norms. Claude-Adrien **Helvetius** saw reason and perception as consisting solely in chains of sensation. People desire their own pleasure and little else, but some are pleasured by the well-being of others. The Enlightenment thinkers generally are stuck in a paradox. On the one hand, they advocate a determinist psychology. On the other, they believe in the virtually unlimited possibilities of transforming human nature. Denis **Diderot** sought gradual replacement of institutions with alternatives that allowed human desires to be expressed. Jean-Jacques **Rousseau** is the most subtle of the Enlightenment thinkers. Human nature, which is simple and good, has been corrupted by political and social institutions. In nature, man was social and his self-love persisted in conjunction with sympathy for others. The natural man entered the social contract to have an institution to make and enforce laws, because natural man wants his life to be lived in reciprocal mutuality with others. Society should be reformed to promote this primitive need, and then men can learn to live as citizens, rather than individuals, in such a restructured society. Man's place is in "a nexus of social relationships."

      Chapter 14: Kant. Kant's thought is a major dividing point in the history of ethics, because he synthesized a resolution of the conflict between the universal claims of Newtonian physics and the skeptical "we know only what we have seen" empiricism of Hume. **Kant** argued that all our experiences will conform to Newtonian laws, not because of the external structure of the universe, but because of the structure of human perception. The human brain actively shapes what data it perceives utilizing categories built into the brain. Kant said, "Concepts without perceptions are empty; perceptions without concepts are blind." Kant went on to argue, based on this insight, that morals lie outside the natural universe. Analyzing the ordinary person's moral consciousness, one discovers that nothing is good but a good will. All other goods (health, wealth, intellect) are good only if used well, but a good will is patently good. A good will wills to do its *duty* for the sake of duty alone. All other motivations compromise the good will, even doing one's duty because one likes it. Duty consists in doing what is universally binding on all rational beings. What is universally binding is a moral imperative I can universalize, that I can will it were a law of nature. Such a universalizable moral imperative is a *categorical imperative*. A categorical imperative has no limiting conditions, whereas a hypothetical imperative is of the form, You ought to do such and such if . . .. The rational human commands himself to his duty, which is the *autonomy of the moral agent*. No other can so command a person, which, when it occurs, is *heteronomy*. One should not look to the consequences of one's actions, but merely to one's duty. MacIntyre criticizes Kant, first, because Kant's moral theory set the ethical plate for the Nazis. Do your duty and do not look to consequences. Second, Kant's categorical imperatives (don't lie, don't break promises) tell us what not to do, but fail to tell us what to do. Third, any moderately clever individual can frame categorical imperatives so that they affect only his own circumstance and still qualify as categorical imperatives. Therefore, categorical imperatives bind only those lacking ingenuity.

      Chapter 15: Hegel and Marx. **Hegel** argued that because of Christianity the individual and the state have become segregated, so that the individual heeds transcendent rules rather than the rules of a particular political state. Hegel seeks to show that the history of philosophy is philosophy's core. Human existence has proceeded through a series of evolutionary transformations, beginning with Master-and-Serf. Misdirected attempts to resolve the deficiencies of the master-serf relation are stoicism, skepticism, and Catholicism, each of which leads to *Unhappy Consciousness*. Such consciousness consists in the inability to withdraw from a society that deforms one even while it defines one. *The negative* impedes human freedom. The negative is the horizon in any historical circumstance, the perceived obstacle in a circumstance that is thought to block human aims or goals. Overcoming the negative is what a person in a particular circumstance means by freedom. Mankind proceeds from lesser to greater freedom by progressing through a thesis, confronting its antithesis, and reaching a new synthesis. For Hegel, moral life is conducted within a certain community, which society defines the values and conduct in play. But considered from outside, the particular values and conduct in play appear arbitrary. From within, they are not. Hegel is frequently obscure, according to MacIntyre, and most so when Hegel argues that his thoughts are God's thoughts. The Young Hegelians took up Hegel, but to purge Hegel of metaphysics and his belief in the Absolute. The most influential of them is Karl **Marx**. Marx

transforms Hegel's thought by insisting that what defines a particular historical circumstance is its mean of producing material goods. Bourgeois society emphasizes capital accumulation via technology. But bourgeois society is stunted by capitalism, as much as freed by it. It keeps man from knowing himself. Marx made two great omissions: 1) Marx fails to define what principles of action should inform the working-class movement, and 2) Marx fails to describe the morality of communist states. These omissions left his successors free to fill in the blanks with devastating results.

Chapter 16: Kierkegaard to Nietzsche. Soren **Kierkegaard** argued that pretenses to moral objectivity obscure the fact that moral standards are radically individualistic choices, and nothing more. Even reason shows this. The justifications one gives for a moral position can themselves be questioned; eventually one ceases giving reasons, and simply stands with his position. Choice is revealed. Life can be *ethical* or *aesthetic*; Kiekegaard pretends neutrality between these two alternatives. The aesthetic life seeks its own satisfaction and romantic love. The ethical life seeks its duty and marriage. Arguments between these two are pointless. Each contender frames his argument so that his own position wins. The ethical precedes the religious. Authentic Christianity is offensive to reason, and necessarily so. It too ultimately depends on radical choice. Skeptical objections to Christianity are not based in doubt, but rather in insubordination toward God and all authority. MacIntyre criticizes Kierkegaard for pretending neutrality as between the ethical and the aesthetic, when Kierkegaard patently prefers the ethical, and also for inconsistency with respect his purported neutrality. Kierkegaard's *authentic individual* chooses with great pain and import just because it is possible to choose wrongly. Kierkegaard cannot admit this, though he occasionally speaks inconsistently in this manner. Heinrich **Heine** asserted that Christianity speaks unintelligibly. Protestantism has curtailed Germanic violence, but only temporarily. Now that Christianity has been demolished, its influence will wane, and Teutonic paganism will surge. He argues that German violence will exceed previous European spasms. **Schopenhauer** believed the universe is meaningless and the individual has no value. The world expresses blind Will. Thought disguises Will. Life is cruel and empty, but thought hides these facts. Nature preserves species, but destroys individuals. *Cosmic Will* continues existence on any terms. Human character is unalterable. Moral philosophy is based on the miscomprehension that people can alter their conduct. Moral philosophy can only describe the moral choices actually made. Human motivations are basically three: 1) self-interest, 2) malice, and 3) sympathy or compassion. Compassion extinguishes self-will. Christ and Buddha disciplined themselves, approaching the final extinction of self. This is a return to the roots of Buddhism. MacIntyre believes Schopenhauer provides a needed corrective to nineteenth century easy optimism. Friedrich **Nietzsche** laid the root of modern sickness at the feet of Christianity. One must overcome the Christian sickness by a *transvaluation of values*, and enter a new form of life. Jews and Christians promoted a *slave morality* of envy. But God is dead. People seek power, not happiness, and the *ubermenschen* (men who transcend) should have it. Nietzsche was not anti-Semitic nor a Teutonic racist. His sister abused his works for the Nazis. But MacIntyre argues that the violence of Nietzsche's language and the emptiness of the Nietzschean ideal lent themselves to her abuses. Nietzsche himself suffered an abiding "historical irresponsibility."

Chapter 17: Reformers, Utilitarians, Idealists. Edmund **Burke** characterized natural rights as metaphysical fictions. Nature includes society as it now exists. He demotes reason, and argues instead that we should rely on habits inculcated by our society. MacIntyre argues that Burke confuses society with the state. Burke overestimates the value of habit, because habits should periodically be revisited to assess their continued propriety. William **Godwin** argued that feelings induce action, but induce right action only if benefited by accurate information. Those who argue any person should be treated differently from other bear the burden of proof of their proposition. Government and society corrupt men to do evil. Good men are persuaded by right reason through other men. The goal is a community of rational actors in which the opinions of the informed prevail. Jeremy **Bentham** saw society as a collection of individuals whose good consists in happiness, which happiness can be mathematically summed. "Good" means the greatest happiness of the greatest number, and every man counts for one and only one. Moral assertions merely assess pain and pleasure. Natural rights talk is "nonsense on stilts." John Stuart **Mill** asked whether the results of utilitarian thought would make him happy. He answered No, and

made adjustments (after a nervous breakdown). MacIntyre criticizes utilitarianism. 1) All pleasures, as Mill recognized, are not equal, and a hierarchy of pleasures is required. 2) The concepts of pleasure and happiness are so stretched that they come to mean no more than what men seek. 3) There are evaluative criteria other than pleasure, e.g., justice, health, subtlety. 4) Humans are malleable, and can be conditioned to be happy with almost anything. 5) Utility works as a moral criterion only if a society of decent people already exists. 6) Utility is so amorphous that it can be used to justify horrors. It effectively abolishes evil. Henry **Sidgwick** was a moral sense ethicist who tried to harmonize utilitarianism with intuitionism. F. H. **Bradley** (an Oxford idealist) broke with utilitarianism to argue that the individual discovers himself only within a societal context. Why should I be moral? The question is out of order. Only within a specific society does one discover moral ends, and realize the self. One realizes self by aspiring to better things, by conforming actual behavior to higher principles. The private self should become a function of the social whole, and willingly so. The goal of human life is to find one's station and perform its specific and concrete duties. Moral language has meaning only within a specific social context with defined roles and functions. T. H. **Green** (another Oxford idealist) was politically active and influential. He argued that human existence cannot be wholly explained by natural law. We know the human good only partly, because we as a race are in process of growing. The good will, per Kant, aims in its efforts and suffering to promote a human society. The self-good dovetails with the other-good, because the individual finds what is good for himself by functioning in a form of life that pre-exists himself. The communal good leads to the good individual life.

Chapter 18: Modern Moral Philosophy. Modern philosophical ethics begins with G. E. **Moore's** *Principia Ethica*. Moore's is an intuitionist ethic. He argues that "good" is a simple and unanalyzable property. How ought we to behave? Do acts that cause more good to exist than any other alternative. MacIntyre dislikes Moore's work, criticizing its numerous unwarranted assertions and distortions of Spencer and Mill. "Good" is not unanalyzable because 1) a name must designate some standard example to which it refers, and 2) Moore's "good" gives no one any reason to act. John **Dewey** differs with Moore. The chief problem with ethical disputes is that we have divorced our discussions from the purposes and points at which we aimed in acquiring our knowledge. The "good" is something that will satisfy our purposes. Dewey downplays the distinction between is and ought. Dewey has not been influential because he did not participate in the mainstream ethical dialogue of his time. H. A. **Prichard** asserted that one cannot offer reasons for doing one's duty. It is an immediate and unquestionable fact. A. J. **Ayer** categorized moral judgment into three classes: logical, factual, and emotive. Into the emotive catch-all category he placed all that was not analytic or empirical, including both ethics and theology. C. L. **Stevenson** argued that ethical precepts exist primarily to change other people's opinions toward our own. No full definition of ethical terms can be given. Philosophical ethics is neutral to the issues that it discusses. And ethical disputes regarding ends must always be interminable. MacIntyre criticizes Stephenson because 1) the meaning of "emotive meaning" is unclear, 2) ethical propositions exist for reasons other than manipulating others, and 3) the theory is opaque. R. M. **Hare** distinguishes prescriptive and descriptive language. Prescriptive language is either imperatival (commands to specific situations and individuals) and evaluative expressions (Ought sentences that apply to all persons in similar circumstances, including the speaker). A good X means that the X is the sort of X one should choose if one wants an X. No ought can proceed merely from an is. Ultimately, my moral evaluations have only the authority of my choice of them to back them up. Persuasive counterexamples to Hare's assertions have been presented. **MACINTYRE'S CONCLUSION**: No single set of moral ideas can penetrate our diverse society. Each person must choose with whom to be bound, and adopt the moral ends and rules of the social group. Otherwise, social grouping is impossible. One cannot look to human nature as a basis for ethical valuations because the various ethical perspectives all come pre-packaged with their own view of human nature. The discussion merely moves back a notch to "human nature" where again the impasse stands. Moral philosophy has a history, and knowing that history inoculates us from false absolutisms. [See Preface to Second Edition, where MacIntrye defends and clarifies against the allegation that he is a relativist.]