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No True Scotsman Disregards the Enlightenment. Alasdair MacIntyre's Critique of the Enlightenment Project

Alasdair MacIntyre is undoubtedly one of the most influential figures that shape philosophical opinions on the Enlightenment.[1] Much like Charles Taylor, he is considered a conservative critic of the Enlightenment's legacy.[2] His critique – which is powerful, yet very well-thought and far from being precipitant – encourages his readers and co-philosophers to rethink the most popular and predominant opinions on the Enlightenment. The line of the critique can be traced on the pages of his most recognized work, the *After Virtue*. Being one of many papers in which MacIntyre tackles with the issue of the Enlightenment and its heritage, this one is certainly special for several reasons. Firstly, because it is his most mature work, often considered a brand of MacIntyre since it was published. Secondly, the *After Virtue* gives a rather brief, yet very sharp account of what the author thinks of the influence the Enlightenment has had on post-Enlightenment philosophy, but also of what were the sources of the revolutionary Enlightenment innovation. The intention of the paper is to look from a perspective at the statement this book contains, and attempt to sketch the backdrop which MacIntyre's

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[1] Christopher Lutz, *Reading Alasdair MacIntyre's After Virtue* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

[2] Witold Nowak, *Spór o nowoczesność w poglądach Charlesa Taylora i Alasdaira MacIntyre'a* (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2018).

perception of the Enlightenment is set upon. Hence, it is not going to be a compilation of quotations that would present a clear entailment, creating a sort of 'MacIntarian syllogism'. With no doubt, that would be impossible, or problematic at best. Why is that and why is the bird's eye view on MacIntyre's critique so challenging?

There are two main reasons for this. The first issue that must be taken into account is the literary style of MacIntyre's book which is a part of the phenomenon of his way of philosophizing. In comparison to academic papers in general, MacIntyre's books show signs of Belles-lettres rather than scholarly works. Heinrich Heine once wrote that there is a common opinion that whoever's literary style is rough, blatant and stark, so – in other words – who cannot actually *write* – is a good philosopher.[3] If and only if this were true – McIntyre would be a very bad philosopher indeed. As his literary style is great and his philosophical books can be read as novels are; they can be stories for adult philosophers or books to read while on holiday. And so, this is not a textbook written in a strictly academic style. To understand the *After Virtue*, one must understand its spirit – the clue is not exactly or explicitly particularized. It is there, between the lines, and it is not as obvious as it seems. Let us take a look at the very first lines of a first chapter from the *After Virtue*:

> Imagine that the natural sciences were to suffer the effects of catastrophe. [...] Later [...] enlightened people seek to revive science, although they have largely forgotten what it was. But all they possess are fragments; a knowledge of experiments detached from any knowledge of theoretical context which gave them significance; parts of theories unrelated either to that there is a common opinion that whoever's literary style is rough, blatant and stark, so – in other words – who cannot actually *write* – is a good philosopher.[4] If and only if this were true – MacIntyre would be a very bad philosopher indeed. As his literary style is great and his philosophical books can be read as novels are; they can be bedtime the other bits and pieces of theory which they possess to experiment; instruments whose use has been forgotten; half-chapters from books, single pages from articles, not always fully legible because of torn and charred.[5]

This picturesque description, being also a mental experiment, continues and constitutes a metaphor – a detail not only decorative but also essential to understand the whole concept of the book. What comes afterwards is an eloquent and logical discourse, but it cannot be called studiously organized in an academic sense. The chapter on contemporary

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[3] Tadeusz Zatorski, "Od tłumacza", in: Ernst Cassirer, *Filozofia Oświecenia* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UW, 2010), VIII.

[4] Ibidem.

[5] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Indiana 1981), 1.

emotivism precedes the chapter on Enlightenment. Yet after that, there is a chapter on Nietzsche and Aristotle, followed by the one on heroic, pre-Aristotelian societies. That would surely be irritating for somebody who demands chronology. And although there are obviously criteria different than historical chronology, there are other fragments which do not seem adequate for an academic paper. There are threads and motifs that appear and disappear; they lose their track as it could be in a story told by the fireplace. It is discernible, for example, when the author describes the background of the Enlightenment and remarks on the post-reformation European culture:

> It was a musical culture and there is perhaps a close relationship between this fact and the central philosophical problems of the culture than has usually been recognized. For the relationship of our beliefs to sentences that we *only* or *primarily* sing, let alone music which accompanies those sentences, is not the same as the relationship of our beliefs to the sentences that we primarily say and say in assertive mode.[6]

This remark seems to be very striking and prolific as it promises great conclusions – but surprisingly, MacIntyre suddenly changes the topic and never comes back to the musical motif. Similar situations happen rather frequently. It does not mean, though, that the book is chaotic; it is potentially richer than it seems at first glance and much of its hidden content is waiting to be discovered and developed.

That is why MacIntyre also flees from all generalizations. Although he is known as one of the chief representatives of communitarianism, he himself claims not to be one exactly – and so on. It must also be admitted that his prose is clearly distinctive from the works by other great minds dabbling with the Enlightenment. Peter Gay, Jonathan Israel or Margaret Jacob would not share MacIntyre's viewpoint. Moreover, each of them represents a far more scholar attitude to writing about the Enlightenment.[7] They are historians of philosophy, while MacIntyre seems to be more of a historian of ideas. This difference may pose a difficulty while comparing these discourses, but it does not preclude it.

What kind of critique can be found in this book? As the title of my short essay says, 'no true Scotsman disregards the Enlightenment'. Alasdair MacIntyre is a true Scotsman, I believe, so denoting his criticism as ruthless is not appropriate. Neither does he try to say that the content of the main ideas of the Enlightenment is inherently faulty.

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[6] Ibidem, 36.

[7] See e.g. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment. An interpretation. The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1995); Margaret Jacobs, *Radical Enlightenment* (Greensboro: The Temple Publishers, 2003); Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

His understanding of the word 'critique' can be expressed as a comprehensive reflection on the history of philosophical thought, its transfigurations and interpretations. From the reading of MacIntyre, it is clear that in the first place his concern is to grasp the source and direction of the movement of certain concepts and systems. In the *After Virtue*, in the chapters devoted to the Enlightenment, the reader can trace the author's diligent and fair journey through the philosophy of the epoch from Diderot through Hume, Smith, Ferguson, Millar, Kames, Monboddo, as far as to Kant and Kierkegaard. This attentive overview is not constructed to find as many weaknesses of the opponent – 'the philosophy of the Enlightenment'– in order to deliver the acute knockout (the fact that MacIntyre did deliver it is another story; the point is that his main issue is to understand, not to smash the opponent).

If someone was to perceive him as a kind of conservative who gets up in arms on the mere mentioning of the Enlightenment, or who blames the Enlightenment for 'destruction of civilization', they would be utterly wrong. Alasdair MacIntyre *does* respect the thinkers of the Enlightenment. There is no single place in the *After Virtue* where we find mockery or any form of grousing about the ideas and spirit of the Enlightenment. All in all, it seems that indeed *critique* and not *criticism* is an adequate word here.

Also, it is not MacIntyre's point to diminish the importance of the Enlightenment. Just the opposite; he considers it the period of profound changes that gives rise to shaping our contemporary way of thinking, the paradigm that is, in the most general sense, considered the paradigm we are deeply rooted in. It is particularly noticeable in the chapter entitled *The Predecessor Culture and the Enlightenment Project of Justifying Morality*, in which he makes the following remark:

> What I am going to suggest is that the key episodes in the social history which transformed [...] morality – and so created the possibility of emotivist self with its characteristic form of relationship and modes of utterance – were episodes in the history of philosophy, that it is only in the light of that history that we can understand how the idiosyncrasies of the everyday contemporary moral discourse come to be.

And he goes on:

> For the claim is that both our general culture and our academic philosophy are in central part the offspring of a culture in which philosophy did constitute a central form of social activity [...] What was that culture? One so close to our own that it is not always easy for us to understand

its distinctiveness, its difference from our own, and so not easy either to understand its unity and coherence.[8]

These pieces of text tell us about two things. The first one is that – in MacIntyre's project of explaining the fall of moral discourse – the Enlightenment plays a crucial role. However, it is not in the sense that the Enlightenment embodies the fall. Rather, the real opponent is clearly indicated here, and it is the contemporary 'emotivist self'. Being an outcome, the Enlightenment can be the main part of the answer. The difference is essential – the Enlightenment is, for MacIntyre, a precious source of finding the explanation of the contemporary ailment. In fact, it may be a means of help, as understanding it can facilitate the analysis of the core of the mistake that is embodied by emotivism.

The second and certainly noteworthy fact is that for MacIntyre, understanding the Enlightenment is necessary so as to answer the question 'Who are we?' If this is the period that made us who we are today and this contribution, as quoted above, went far enough that the influence of the epoch is almost indiscernible from our own age, then it must be concluded that MacIntyre considers contemporary man, including himself (there is no reason why not), a child (he uses term 'offspring') and an heir of the Enlightenment. This conclusion, shocking as it may sound, inevitably follows from his book. Now, it will take surgical precision to actually discern what is a post-Enlightenment residue and what is purely contemporary. And yet, MacIntyre somehow manages to do it, or at least he believes it is possible to do so, since he clearly aims at harsh criticism of the emotivist self, but he is not that harsh with the Enlightenment. Similarly, he can produce a devastating criticism of nietzscheanism,[9] but for some reasons, he does not do this with the Enlightenment. Taking those into account, it may be noteworthy that in this respect he is similar to Charles Taylor, another conservative historian of philosophy, who treats the Enlightenment as a yet another layer of our own identity.[10]

And still, after all the reservations mentioned above, the critique is, in a sense, one of the most crushing ones; the one that is currently a basis for wide criticism of the Enlightenment project.

How can it happen? To show how it functions, a very general thesis extracted from the book will be presented, and then, the manner how exactly this perspective on MacIntyre's 'novel' can be justified will be explained.

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8   MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 35–36.
9   Ibidem, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Inquiry* (Indiana: Notre Dame, 1990), 196–215.
10   Nowak, *Spór o nowoczesność w poglądach Charlesa Taylora i Alasdaira MacIntyre'a*.

The sentence that could characterize MacIntyre's *After Virtue* view on the Enlightenment sounds very conservative indeed. It is as follows: "There is immeasurable incommensurability between what was then and what is now."

It obviously looks ultra-general. What is meant here is that the Enlightenment made possible a certain profound change, the change so essential that it is impossible to imagine the outcome (the present state) without this particular set of ideas that emerged in the Enlightenment. And of course, having said that, we may note that this reflection is the one that could be shared by everyone, regardless of whether they are opposed to or fond of the period. The proponents of the Enlightenment will also emphasize a vast change that was made possible by the Enlightenment paradigm, and they will claim that there is incommensurability between the set of the pre-Enlightenment ideas (that they will consider somehow lacking) and the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment ones (that they will perceive as enriched in an essential way).[11] It is obvious, though, that for the author in question the change is not for better – or, at least, the 'good' achieved owing to the Enlightenment movement is too negligible in relation to the values that were lost. It seems to prove that MacIntyre has indeed a really conservative heart.[12] So, this wildly general question can be dismantled into three sub-questions. What can be found here is this incommensurability – the difference between something that was then and what is now. But one should note, however, that this is not judgmental; yet, it is just a statement of the fact that something has changed.

Three questions can be asked:1) What is it that changed? 2) What does 'then' exactly mean, and how was it in that primeval state? And finally: 3) What is now and what happened that it is as it is? These are just some of the most important questions that may be applied to this simple, general statement. Now, an attempt to speak for MacIntyre in order to answer these questions tracked down on the pages of his great narrative will be made. The thing that changed is, I believe, our way of thinking about, internalizing, and expressing moral judgments. The title of the book, *After Virtue*, suggests that a virtue used to be an embodiment of ethical judgment, but it is not such anymore. The ethics, hence, does not express itself in terms of virtue. People do not think, generally,

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[11] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the self* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[12] It is really hard to define conservatism. It is too wide a notion. But, I believe, there is one small and trivial thing: to be a conservative – you must be able to be driven by the emotion that makes you sit in a rocking chair, light your pipe and say with a little dose of melancholy: Ah! How great was the world BACK THEN! – and, whatever BACK THEN is and whatever are your reasons, this is sine qua non the emotion of conservatism.

in terms of virtue. This is what Alasdair MacIntyre wants to say. How-ever, his point is not 'we forgot the virtue' in the sense that there was the right thing to do which people once did and now, corrupted and mor-ally perverted, are not able to do, doing the wrong thing instead. This is **not** his point. Let this be repeated once again: moral judgments were once expressed in terms of virtues and now they are not. The key issue is the scheme we set our ethical system, or – broadly speaking – ethical thinking. The question why it is so important requires an answer, but now, let us take a closer look at the remaining questions – when did the way of thinking about ethics change or, to be more precise, what was the turning point from which there was no return to the old way? – as it is clear that there is no radical change from year to year, for example. The change is a product of a process which takes time and is supported by many thinkers, so – who were the fathers of the change and, in terms of the time, when did it begin? To answer that, we must clearly differen-tiate between **then** and **now** – these two general operators from the main statement.

For MacIntyre, the times **of** virtue (and not the times **after** it, which happen to be our times) are the times of this living European tradition that was a legacy of the Aristotelian theory of virtues, and which lasted throughout medieval times, renaissance, up to 'say 1630 to 1850'.[13] It is important to remind what MacIntyre does not mean here, namely, that societies of the Middle Ages practiced some virtues that were ruined by villains that came right after this 1630. What has changed since then?

MacIntyre's theory of human nature contains two basic facts con-cerning a human. The first fact is that there is a difference between the man as he happens to be and the man as he could be – potentially – if he realized his essential inner nature. The second one is that – in order to be happy and avoid frustration or incompleteness – the man has to make the transition from the first state to another. So, he must use the power of this potentiality of his nature.[14]And, the task of the virtue is to help the man in this transition. The virtue is a vehicle that takes us from 'how we are' to 'how we could be'. Please note that this general scheme of human nature can be put into many cultural, philosophical and religious set-tings. It fits the Aristotelian eudaemonism, but it also meets the Christian belief in the original sin and the necessity of redemption. What is most important is that the question of fulfillment is not 'merely' a moral ques-tion. So, the task of transition is *not* a task that is tackled only by a specific discipline called morality or the theory of morality. Now, what arises from this scheme is a holistic, all-encompassing project, because the hu-man who wants fulfillment also wants the total fulfillment; he wants not

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[13] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 38.
[14] Ibidem.

only to be a good, law-respecting citizen (probably also, but not only) – he wants art, religion; he wants health, spiritual development, intellectual development – everything at once. Theology and art, literature and laws of the city; customs and traditions – all of these contribute to this great project of realizing human potentiality. Theoretically at least, all of this should remain in harmony, just like – which is an important point – the Cosmos is harmony. The world – not only physical but also spiritual – is harmony. When the medieval man looks around the world, what does he see? He sees hierarchy which is a reflection of the cosmic harmony. When he looks inside his own soul, he sees a microcosm where everything happens at once and everything harmonizes. What happens next, according to MacIntyre?

Let us focus our attention on this historical period he mentions – from, 'say 1630 to 1850'. What happens at that time? This is the time when the modern notion of 'morality' is forged. So, we could say that, at that time, morality is born. Why would that be anything in any way negative?[15]

The word 'moral' existed before, but it had a far broader meaning. It meant, MacIntyre writes, 'pertaining to character'.[16]The Character is, as we already know, a tool that may help fulfill the potentiality of human nature. But then, the term 'moral' starts to narrow its meaning.

It is in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that it recognizably takes on its modern meaning and becomes available for the contexts which I have just noted.[17] It is in the late seventeenth century that it is used for the first time in its most restricted sense of all, that in which it has to do primarily with sexual behavior.[18]

So, the term 'moral' specializes. It sharpens a bit and, consequently, it becomes narrower. This means that if you want to be moral, you have to look into a special discipline and special codes that tell you what to do and what not to do. What happens, then? If the term shrinks, it loses its connection to the rest of the holistic world. If in the patchwork blanket consisting of many patches some of them shrinks, then everything collapses. If there is a special discipline and a special sphere of moral codes, what about this holistic nature of transition that the man must take in order to fulfill his nature, his *telos*? Someone could call Alasdair MacIntyre a moral philosopher, but he would most eagerly do away with the word 'moral' or 'morality'. For in the universe of essence, nature, and virtues,

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[15] For the other conservative perspective on the notion of morality see also Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.

[16] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 37.

[17] Here, MacIntyre wrote about meanings connected with legality or religious ones.

[18] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 37.

everything matters. And to be a good man means to realize all human parts of experience – intellectual, bodily, spiritual, social, religious, and artistic – if one can manage to do so. And all of this, treated *as serving* for fulfilling your nature, *is* moral.

It can be said that for MacIntyre extracting morality as an essence itself is like an artificial, sterile process whose consequence is crushing the unity of the Universe, tearing the coherent world apart. This is the metaphor he uses in the first chapter of his book, *A Disquieting Suggestion*. This book is well-known because of the powerful image it sketches. Such he speaks of the people who try to regain the unity after catastrophe:

> [...] all they possess are fragments: a knowledge of experiments detached from any knowledge of theoretical context that gave them significance; parts of theories unrelated either to the other bits and pieces of theory which they possess or to experiment; instruments whose use has been forgotten; half-chapters from books, single pages from articles, not always fully legible because torn and charred.[19]

As we can see, this is what happened – we extracted morality from the harmonious Universe of human improvement in cosmic and always hierarchical structures, and this is what we get – pieces without meaning, because their meaning can only be seen in the broader picture.

How does it relate to the Enlightenment? Why does Alasdair MacIntyre say about a 'failure' when he mentions the Enlightenment project? After all reservations that have been already made here, it is clear that MacIntyre does not consider Enlightenment *a failure*. What he undoubtedly tries to say is that there was a kind of project – he calls the Enlightenment *the project*, and he is one of the first thinkers to do so, which is confirmed by James Schmidt on his inspiring blog dedicated to the Enlightenment, 'Persistent Enlightenment'. For MacIntyre, the expression *project* is not just a way to make it sound modern and business-connected – and thus attractive. (MacIntyre would think the opposite – such a language would lower value of the thing called with such a name.) He points to the fact that the enlightened thinkers undertook an ambitious attempt – an attempt to justify morality (as it was said before – *mere* morality, devoid of its holistic context). The nature of this project was to carry out a conclusive apology of morality itself, morality extracted; morality with a meaning so narrow that it has probably never before been present in the history of human reflection on the right or wrong.

Let us stress once again, and powerfully – MacIntyre does not see any global perversion of the content of moral norms in the Enlightenment. To give some solid facts – he writes about Hume and Diderot. Though

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[19] Ibidem, 1.

seen as radical, MacIntyre reasserts that they held a very conservative view on the content of moral norms. What is more, MacIntyre goes as far as to say that all the main Enlightenment thinkers share a general view of the content of norms, and they inherit it from their Christian background – even if there are some differences, MacIntyre does not consider them so important. What made the project a failure was an attempt to support these very views with arguments that came from a universe different than the one these views were forged in. MacIntyre seems to be conveying the idea that it is impossible to justify Christian norms in the secular world; that it is impossible to maintain the significance of virtues in the world that does not hold Aristotelian metaphysical views of potentiality and act; you cannot properly understand marriage in the universe in which it is not a part of the cosmic harmony. It can be clearly seen in the systems of two great epigones of the Enlightenment. The *True Scotsman* brings them to our attention because, as he believes, they show very explicitly what the weaknesses of the project were and prove its ultimate failure. Who are the two philosophers, then, and how do they show the futility of the project?

Both Kierkegaard and Kant,[20] as they are the mean MacIntyre speaks of, can see the discrepancy between the human nature – as we find in ourselves – and the set of old, quite demanding rules.[21] In justifying morality, everyone tries to extend the bridge between accessibility of these rules and human weaknesses. Diderot sees this bridge in human psychology; Hume and Smith call it 'sympathy'. All of these attempts seem to be imperfect, and the two great minds, closing the era of the Enlightenment, seek a correction of their predecessors' projects.

Kant grounds his justification in rationality. For this 'decent protestant', all of the old moral norms had to be kept, but it was obvious that neither the fact that they are God's commands, nor their alleged helpfulness in pursuing happiness, made any use. He could not refer to a theological explanation or to eudaemonic hints for the obvious reason – the Enlightenment rejected both. However, he was not satisfied with any of the so-far enlightenment justifications. As a result, he came up with his own model of the bridge – the pure rationality. This rationality is the same for all rational beings and can be embodied by the will – another central Kantian notion.[22] The opposite, yet equally powerful, was the idea

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[20] For other perspectives on Kant's and Kierkegaard's accounts of human nature, see also e.g. Valentine Ehichioya Obinyan, "Nature of Human Existence in Kierkegaard's Ethical Philosophy: A Step towards Self-Valuation and Transformation in Our Contemporary World", *International Journal of Philosophy* 1, 2 (2014): 1–14; Robert Louden, *Kant's Human Being. Essays on His Theory of Human Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[21] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 39–45.

[22] Ibidem, 42–45.

by Søren Kierkegaard. His insightful view on the imperfection of other justifications made him create the project of criterion less choices – the choices that are governed by no rules but the courage of making them. There are three different lifestyles and before you decide on choose one, their premises are totally incompatible, and you cannot judge the value of them except for the situation you are *already* inside. As MacIntyre notes, thanks to the fact that Kierkegaard was so gifted as a writer, the idea is conveyed through the structure of his *Enter-Eller*. We do not really know what the author's views are, as he hides behind numerous masks and never reveals his true identity. He sheds the costumes one by one, revealing a multi-layered structure of his ethical identity.[23] But, MacIntyre says, none of them offered a successful account of morality. Some of Kantian maxims do not pass his own test, whereas some trivial ones do pass the test.[24] As for Kierkegaard, his literary masterpiece is a proof in itself – there *is* no justification until you have already chosen your own. There is no rationality in choosing this or that moral system – there is just 'leap of faith'. The fact that Kierkegaard wrote of this lack of criteria in such a radical and sincere manner makes his philosophy great and highly valuable in MacIntyre's eyes.

But, most importantly, it reasserts his thesis that the Enlightenment failed in its project of justifying morality as a specific discipline of a narrow meaning. No wonder, MacIntyre seems to say that *even the Enlightenment itself* could not justify morality – it is impossible to do so if moral judgments are not a part of the Universe, a coherent harmony where celestial bodies have their own goals and humans have theirs, and the latter can only reach them through applying virtues.

I hope to have shown that it is not MacIntyre's strategy to diminish the value of his opponents – there is no place where he mocks any of the Enlightenment thinkers (maybe French Enlightenment is an exception).He ascribes good intentions to them, and the whole core of his criticism of the Enlightenment admitted that the mission undertaken by those who wanted to justify morality as such was literally a mission impossible. Therefore, it may be said that the Enlightenment itself, and especially the Scottish Enlightenment, was not perceived by MacIntyre as *the problem* – it could be one of the attempts to solve it. *The problem*, in fact (and its origins can be compared to Pandora's box), has its sources in human's need to justify morality as the discipline different and separate from all other important spheres of human life seen as a whole. The Enlightenment with its answers, trying to provide medication to that illness, actually made things worse – or such is MacIntyre's opinion. But surely, the author of the *After Virtue* did not write a bitter diatribe against

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[23] Ibidem, 39–41.
[24] Ibidem, 44.

the Scottish Enlightenment – and it is worth remembering while examining MacIntyre's criticism of the epoch.

Referring to the three main questions of the paper[25], there is an attempt to summarize the above content in such a way that these three are, *grosso modo*, answered. To be a precise reflection of MacIntyre's views of that matter, the answer to the first question would have to be at least a monograph. By necessity, it shall be a dramatic simplification. But since no human thinking can do without a great deal of simplification, let us put it in this way: according to MacIntyre, the essential change concerned understanding morality;[26] the interpretation of the general theory of discerning of what is right from what is wrong varied depending on what part of a wider worldview it constituted.[27] If it was integrated into a general worldview as an integral and not entirely discernible constituent, it was – according to our Scotsman – sound and solid. When it lost its connection with other parts of the worldview, such as religion, tradition, or the hierarchy of the community – it developed a disease of dogmatism, affectation, incoherence.[28]

As for the second question, MacIntyre pinpoints the period where the word 'morality' changed its meaning.[29] But of course, the actual process that led to this change had to have its origins a long time before that. And although Nowak claims:

> The essential purpose of MacIntyre's project is critique of modern culture in its moral aspect. MacIntyre tries to demonstrate that it assumes emotivism and since he sees the source of emotivism in the Enlightenment, and strictly speaking – in its failure, the critique of modernity becomes for him the critique of this project and its assumptions,[30]

I cannot entirely agree. Nothing can be further from emotivism, its neurotical relativism, and its focus on the self, than the dispassionate and objectively rational Enlightenment spirit. It is a fact that for MacIntyre the greatest intellectual opponent is emotivism[31] and that historical (chronological) path to it did lead through the Enlightenment – but I hope that this paper makes it a little bit clearer that he does not 'blame'

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[25] Namely 1. what is it that changed, 2. 'then' – when is it exactly, and how was it in that primeval state, when exactly did the process of the rejection of ethics understood in terms of virtues start, and 3. how can the present state of morality be adequately described.

[26] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*.

[27] Ibidem.

[28] Ibidem.

[29] Ibidem, 37.

[30] Nowak, *Spór o nowoczesność w poglądach Charlesa Taylora i Alasdaira MacIntyre'a*, 49.

[31] MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 22–35.

the Enlightenment to be the womb in which *the* Evil has been spawn. But the Enlightenment, as it was shown in the paper, was one of the attempts to solve the problem. A failed attempt, according to MacIntyre. But if one dislikes landscapes of Spain, they do not blame France for the idiosyncrasies of Spain *just because* one goes to Spain via France, if heading from the east. And I believe it was not MacIntyre's real purpose to postpone the Enlightenment because of its alleged child; emotivism.

The third question was indirectly answered above. In most of his works on ethics and its history, MacIntyre criticizes emotivism as the state of disintegration which ethics is in.[32] And it is responsible for not only the wrong understanding of what morality is, but also makes impossible any rational discussion between different concepts of morality.[33]This seems to be a much bigger problem than the fact that there *is* a moral that somebody, like MacIntyre in this case, disagrees with.

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[32] Ibidem, 22–35.
[33] Ibidem, 22–35.

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Summary

Alasdair MacIntyre, being one of the most notorious critics of the Enlightenment
project, does not deny good intentions of those who created values of what we
today call the Enlightenment project. Criticising emotivism that stems from the
values of the Enlightenment project, he does not claim that the Enlightenment
itself destroyed European culture of ethics or that it intended to turn the way
of thinking about ethics upside down. Yet, MacIntyre claims that moral philoso-
phy before the Enlightenment and after it are two distinctive systems, the second
one being in a constant process of corrupting.

What is the most important in the paper is showing that for MacIntyre, the
Enlightenment project was an attempt to justify traditional European morality,
but it was a failed attempt. It was because the universe as a unified structure per-
ceived by a human as such became partitioned and knowledge of it divided into
many disciplined. This disintegration, reinforced by the Enlightenment, is the
very core of anything that Alasdair MacIntyre ever sees as a vice in moral phi-
losophising.

Keywords: Enlightenment, MacIntyre, ethics, virtues, conservatism