

## A Critique, Alasdair MacIntyre

“Moral judgments express feelings or attitudes,” it is said. “What kind of feelings or attitudes?” we ask. “Feelings or attitudes of approval,” is the reply. “What kind of approval?” we ask, perhaps remarking that approval is of many kinds. It is in answer to this question that every version of emotivism either remains silent, or by identifying the relevant kind of approval as moral approval – that is, the type of approval expressed by a specifically moral judgment – becomes vacuously circular.

What is “moral approval?” It depends partly on the belief that a particular act is morally good (and that belief may come from a number of different sources depending on whether you are a naturalist utilitarian, a non-naturalist Kantian or a follower of a religion that looks to divine commands). But the emotivist defines “morally good” as an ‘expression of approval’. The emotivist is unable to distinguish between my dislike of curries from my dislike of genocide. But the difference between the two is profound. I dislike curry because I don’t like its taste. I abhor genocide because it’s immoral”.

(Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, page 12)