The aim of this essay is to provide a theoretically satisfactory definition of communitarianism, a definition which would be theoretically prolific and so fully substantial that it would allow to distinguish communitarianism from the other philosophical streams; and it would give us an answer as to why a given idea or thinker is categorized as communitarian. The essence of this goal is to show a rationally justified method of constructing the definition of communitarianism.

This aim will be achieved in three steps: 1. Showing that communitarianism related research has not been able to provide a theoretically satisfactory definition of the philosophy; 2. Identifying the causes of this theoretical failure; 3. Formulating a rational method for constructing the theoretically satisfactory definition of communitarianism.

The current state of knowledge in research on the concept of communitarianism

At first look it could be seen that a common agreement exists in professional international literature about what communitarianism is. Most authors hold that communitarianism is an antiliberal stream in a contemporary Anglo-Saxon political philosophy which emerged late in the XX century. Its principal idea is to affirm a community as an indispensable for achieving a moral dimension of life and an encumbrance by the self. The most influential and well known communitarian
philosophers are Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer.¹

Although this popular concept of communitarianism seems to be clear, all attempts to provide a theoretical grasp, expression, and precise definition of this concept have come to nothing. When researchers of communitarianism had tried to explain rationally what the essence of communitarianism is (an essence which unites all communitarian thinkers and simultaneously distinguishes them from other philosophers and intellectual streams) it was never theoretically acceptable. This state of research caused confusion and skepticism about whether communitarianism is an autonomous philosophical stream.

As Richard Posner has noticed, the intrinsic diversity of communitarianism is so radical that there is no way to conceptualize it. He claims that communitarianism has so many distinct designations that we cannot say with certainty what it really means; he asserts that there is no reason to denominate all of these various thinkers, ideas and streams as “communitarian.”² This claim is acknowledged by Allen E. Buchanan who in 1989 stated, “there are perhaps almost as many communitarian position as there are communitarian writers.”³

In addition, even the most paramount scientific analysis of the political philosophy of communitarianism, made by Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, cannot provide an acceptable definition of communitarianism; though their work examined only four communitarian thinkers, MacIntyre, Sandel, Taylor, Walzer. They concluded

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that the essence of communitarianism can be described in what all of these four thinkers refer to as the concept of community, but they are described in "significantly different ways". Mulhall and Swift came to the consensus that "united around a conception of human beings as integrally related to the communities of culture and language that they create, maintain and inhabit". Though, the essence of communitarianism identified by Mulhall and Swift is not theoretically acceptable, because it does not allow leeway to distinguish communitarianism from other philosophical streams (a lot of intellectual conceptions throughout history and current emphasize great weight on the idea of the community and the fact that selves are related with it).

Whereas, with regard to communitarian critics of liberalism, Mulhall and Swift cannot find any essence uniting these four thinkers: "Walzer's criticism of the methodological abstraction he identifies with Rawlsian liberalism is not directly supported by the work of the other three critics; and their opposition to the Rawls' conception of the person, his asocial individualism, his moral subjectivism and his claims to neutrality is not paralleled in Walzer's work."

Authors beyond Anglo-Saxon political philosophy assert that it is hard to find unity among so-called communitarian thinkers. For example, Anita Gawkowska in Taking Community Seriously. Communitarianisms as Critics of Liberalism (Biorąc wspólnotę poważnie. Komunitarystyczne krytyki liberalizmu) ascertains the heterogeneity of communitarianism and suggests abandoning the term "communitarianism". Instead of using "communitarianism" she uses the term "communitarianisms as critics of liberalism". Gawkowska writes, "With regard to it I decided to analyze communitarianists as critics of liberalism in place of searching an essence of communitarianism which is hard to identify." In this case, the lack of a theoretically satisfactory definition of communitarianism causes not only confusion of ideas but also logical contradiction. The practice of using just the plural of the given concept without making a theoretical definition (because there is a small possibility of finding the essence of this concept) is a reductio ad absurdum mistake. If given intellectual positions cannot be reduced (in this case differential communitarianisms) to a common denominator the decision is made to not talk about communitarianism but about communitarianisms. Then, the question arises of why identify these and not the other philosophical streams as communitarian (as communitarianisms)? The answer is: 1. There is some unity, some common denominator and then we can without hesitation talk about communitarianism; 2. Moving back on our explanation

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4 S. Mulhall, A. Swift, Liberals and Communitarians..., p. 162.
5 Liberals and Communitarians..., p. 159.
to the other answers, for example, that as communitarians we treat specific philosophers who we enumerate, but this still leads up to the same question of why shall we identify these and not the other philosophers as communitarian? Hence, *reductio ad absurdum* mistake.

Likewise, communitarians themselves have seen the problem with the theoretical concept of communitarianism. For example, Michael Sandel, commonly referred to as the main communitarian philosopher, cut himself off the label "communitarian". He stated, "The liberal-communitarian debate that has raged among political philosophers in recent years describes a range of issues, and I do not always find myself on the communitarian side." In the interview for "The Harvard Review of Philosophy" Sandel noted, "You must understand that this term 'communitarianism', is a label: it was introduced by others to describe the debate that flowed from some of the criticisms of liberalism that I made and that others made. The reason I’m uneasy with the communitarian label is that 'communitarianism' suggests the idea that the values that prevail in any given community at any given time are just (...) That seems to me a mistake." 7

Michael Walzer and Charles Taylor (as Amy Gutmann writes) also cut themselves off the communitarian label and prefer the term "liberal". Simultaneously Walzer tries to push an opinion about communitarianism as the non-autonomous philosophical stream which does not have a core. Communitarianism, as Walzer assumes, is only a passing phenomenon accompanying liberalism, a kind of inner correction of liberalism. 9 Furthermore, MacIntyre in a letter to the "The Responsive Community" wrote that he was not a communitarian and did not want to be connected with any communitarian activities. 11

This general skepticism with regards to the definition of communitarianism is motivated by the heterogeneity of the philosophy. Even among four main communitarian positions there are intense differences; the difference is obvious when comparing the conceptions of MacIntyre and Walzer. The task is much more complicated when we consider less typical communitarian conceptions like for example

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the communitarian liberalism of John Gray or communitarianism as described in Rawls’ philosophy.

Situations in the research on communitarianism look as follows: the confusion of ideas, the lack of coherence and skepticism are results of the fact that researchers have not created/discovered theoretical concepts of communitarianism. They use a pretheoretical concept and any attempt to climb on a theoretical level or to generalize the “popular” concept fizzle out. The question still remains of why people classify given philosophical ideas and positions as communitarian?

**CAUSES OF MISFORTUNE IN THE RESEARCH ON COMMUNITARIANISM**

Our conception assumes that the cause of the query of the definition of communitarianism is not an irremovable inner heterogeneity of this philosophical stream, but unaware methodological premise. This methodological premise asserts that a theoretical concept should be constructed in such a way that would allow unambiguous concern to all of its designations. This premise could be called the requirement of common denominator, an example of this would be that theoretical concept of culture should concern every phenomenon which in the pretheoretical discourse is called culture. The same requirement guides the researchers of communitarianism.

The theoretical concept of communitarianism should unambiguously concern all ideas which are called communitarian in a pretheoretical discourse. There is a necessity to seek unity among all these ideas; with regard to communitarianism this requirement fails.

Although the requirement of the common denominator is a rational way of constructing theoretical concepts, it is not the only appropriate method of acting in

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12 Generally: in our opinion the difference between theoretical and pretheoretical concept consists in answering a question: is there rational justification for using given concept in given denotation. Pretheoretical concept does not have such justification. Although it can be used to describe some phenomena, it does not have rational justification why given phenomena are described by it, and there is no rule how to use this concept to describe new, unknown phenomena. Theoretical concept has got such justification – it consists in introducing a rational method of constructing such concept. For example, pretheoretical concept of law points at some legal systems but people who use this concept cannot say why phenomena which they points at are law. When they would say why all these phenomena are cases of law (maybe by finding a common denominator for all these phenomena – see below), they will generate some kind of theoretical concept of law. (The rational method in question is just the rule of common denominator.)
the social science. From the beginning of social science there is a known an alternative methodological rule. It was Aristotle who presented this rule first. This is the methodological category έφ’ ένός. Aristotle used this category to describe a field of human acting, for example friendship. He distinguishes έφ’ ένός of friendship and its peripheral, “diluted” cases. Aristotle writes: “It follows, therefore, that there are three sorts of friendship, and that they are not all so termed in respect of one thing or as species of one genus, nor yet have they the same name entirely by accident.” All uses of the term are related to one particular sort of friendship which is primary, like the term ‘surgical’. We speak of a surgical mind and a surgical hand and a surgical instrument and a surgical operation, but we apply the term properly to that which is known as the primary. The primary is that of which the definition is implicit in the definition of all. For example, a surgical instrument is an instrument that a surgeon would use, whereas the definition of the instrument is not implicit in that of surgeon. Therefore in every case people seek the primary, and because the universal is primary they assume that also the primary is universal; but this is untrue. Hence, in the case of friendship, one cannot take into account all the observed facts. For as one definition does not fit, people presume that other kinds of friendship are not friendships at all, but really they are, although not in the same way. But when they find that the primary friendship does not fit, assuming that it would be universal if it really were primary, they say that the others are not friendships at all. But in reality there are many kinds of friendships…

John M. Finnis used the Aristotelian category έφ’ ένός to construct a theoretical concept of law (especially natural law). He refused the assertion of Kelsen, Raz and Hart, that to construct a definition of law we must rest on methodological requirement of the common denominator. As Finnis sees it, we can use the ambiguity of theoretical terms of a given intellectual system and thanks to that we can distinguish, in the field of human acting, things more developed from the immature, fully-fledged from un/fledged, exquisite from primitive, flourishing from declining, healthy from defective. We can distinguish that what is simple and straightforward from that what is quasi, a sort of, in a sense and somehow. But we do not need to ignore these

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16 Ibidem, p. 17.
primitive and unfledged cases of a given object, we do not need to treat these cases as if they were from another domain.

Providing a theoretically satisfactory definition of communitarianism rests on the application of the Aristotelian category ἐφ’ ἐνός with regard to communitarianism. This will also exemplify that the application of ἐφ’ ἐνός category will bring more satisfactory results than the previous practice. This category will allow us to distinguish (as Aristotle had done with regard to friendship and Finnis with regard to law) the chief and peripheral cases of communitarianism. It will allow for the possibility to provide better explanations for these “diluted” variants of the chief case of communitarianism by following the analogies, similarities and differences among main and peripheral cases. But most of all, this application will diminish all of the unscientific confusion of ideas typical for research on communitarianism. A foundation will be established with regards to in what sense one would use the term “communitarianism”, what does it mean and we will dispose scepticism and contradictions.

ΈΦ’ έΝΌΣ OF COMMUNITARIANISM – METHODOLOGICAL ISSUE

The introduction of a method of identification ἐφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism is key in defining the philosophy. Using this Aristotelian methodological category ἐφ’ ἐνός method, a justification can be made that will prove that it is adequate to research communitarianism and will end with theoretically satisfying results. The argumentation goes as follows:

1. First Step. The start point is the ascertainment of three facts: 1. On the pretheoretical level there is a consensus among researchers on what communitarianism is, they use this term to describe some kind of critics of contemporary liberalism which are motivated by the “care for community”\textsuperscript{17}; 2. Thinkers who are considered

\textsuperscript{17} The concept of the “care for community” is a metaphorical mental abbreviation. With the help of this concept we want to express an idea that there is some framework of communitarianism inside which there are conducted different analyses of modern society, its history, liberal thought and its consequences and hidden presuppositions etc. – this framework is the ascertainment of the importance of the community and the ascertainment of the fact of its depreciation. We should understand the concept of the “care for community” as theoretical (so philosophical, sociological, historical etc.) diagnosis, prognosis and postgno-sis of the condition of the communities and their connection with human existence and also an effort of elimination the faulty assertions about it. The difference between philosophical deep and shallow “care for community” could have a divers character. But for approximating this difference we can consider two hypothetical conceptions – deep and shallow: 1. one of them asserts that the crisis of communities is caused only by unfavourable legislation which give very small autonomy for local communities; 2. the second one asserts that the cause of
communitarians, actually criticize liberalism in the defense of community; 3. There is no theoretical satisfactory criterion which would allow to either evaluate these pretheoretical researchers’ opinions or say why are given philosophical positions classified as communitarian – our aim is to find this criterion.

To summarize, the method acts as a starting point for identifications which already exist, but are not said to be correct. So, the source does not start from nothing but from the pretheoretical discourse. The consequence (C) of these presumptions leads to the following assertion: pretheoretical identification of communitarianism (as some kind of critics of contemporary liberalism which are motivated by the “care for community”) is not satisfactory. It is not satisfactory because inter alia: a) It is too much vague and general (a lot of different philosophical positions can be described as critics of contemporary liberalism which are motivated by the “care for community”); b) The nature and profundity of these critics and “care for community” are significantly different depending on given thinker; c) It results in skepticism, confusion of ideas and contradictions.

2. Second step. The main problem is the fact that it is not known which case of communitarianism is the ēφ’ ēνός and which cases are peripheral. There is no theoretical concept that would allow an evaluation of the given communitarian positions and pretheoretical identifications; this concept must be found. All that is at hand is the input data: 1., 2., 3. and consequence (C) which has been accepted.

Even by accepting the crucial motive of the communitarian philosophy as being the “care for community”, – 1. and 2., a sufficient common denominator would not be formed – consequence (C) – but it does not mean that it is not sufficient criterion for choosing the ēφ’ ēνός of communitarianism. De facto, it is the only possible criterion to set ēφ’ ēνός of communitarianism, because on the pretheoretical level there are no other identifications of unity among communitarian positions and on the theoretical level any attempts to establish such unity were unsatisfactory, as we affirmed in point 3. On a pretheoretical level, communitarianism was identified as the “care for community”. So why regard such a version of communitarianism which treats the community qua inessential (and instead of that it is engaged in others problems, for example the defense of the corrected version of liberalism) as the chief case of communitarianism? Would it not be a peripheral case of communitarianism?

crisis but also of such legislation is a deep change in our culture and morality. It is clear that conception which analyses community on the ontological, anthropological, epistemological, sociological and political levels is philosophically deeper and more momentous than conception which analyses community only on sociological or political level. The same can be said about conceptions which are mistaken and incoherent.
The refutation of our criterion would require a comprehensive and wide justification; a justification which would have to show a falseness of the pretheoretical concept.

By accepting b), that communitarians differ among themselves with regard to nature and profundity of the “care of community”, one would like to consider such version of communitarianism as “care for community”. This version is “philosophically deepest and most momentous” to be the chief case of communitarianism it would be “the most communitarian communitarianism”.

3. Third step. How to evaluate which “care for community” is philosophically deepest and most momentous? Our argumentation (the first) steps only inside a small range of thinkers, not all possible ones. So, our question is not: “which care is the deepest and most momentous among all possible versions and in every respect – that is absolute”, but just: “which care is the deepest and most momentous among thinkers and conceptions chosen in the first step 1 and with respects noticed by these thinkers”.

Conditio sine qua non of the answer for the question which care is the deepest and most momentous one is considering and understanding conceptions of communitarians, their diagnosis, analyses, arguments with regard to community. Doing so, the significant differences among these thinkers can be seen. Most of all it can be noticed that some communitarians treat the problem of community as relatively marginal, that they consider this problem only on a political level, that they cannot see its philosophical sources or belittle them, that they do not make original diagnosis but rely on diagnosis made by others etc. Other thinkers, a contrario, see the problem of depreciation of community as one of the most burning questions in the contemporary world. They analyze the roots of this situation in a way that others would not even think about. They analyze the problem of community on any possible level, from philosophical through sociological to psychological.

It is noticeable that as some uncritically accept the presented reality, the others throw doubt on common opinion. What ones deems to be dangerous for the human’s identity, others calmly neglect. Some researchers identified a large problem, in which the others passed with disrespect. All of these examples can be seen even when we the same term “communitarianism” is used to denominate different positions as MacIntyre’s and Walzer’s. Furthermore, communitarians themselves notice this situation. For example, where Walzer asserts that the interest in community is just the inner correction of liberalism, there, a contrario, MacIntyre considers that the revival of communities is the chance for stopping the coming of a new barbarity.

So how to evaluate which care is the deepest and most momentous? The answer is by analysing the positions of communitarians in the same way, from the same point of view that analyse the problem of community. If communitarian A considers the problem of community to be marginal while communitarian B to be very important then for what reasons may we deem conceptions of communitarian A to be a
The Concept of Communitarianism

The Concept of Communitarianism

4. Conclusion. Now the chosen method of identification the ἔφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism can be summarized. Starting with facts expressed in the first step, where a pretheoretical understanding of communitarianism as the care for community was obtained. It was acknowledged that this was the only possible and not controversial way of thinking about communitarianism on the pretheoretical level. If this is the sole accessible ground, it must also be the sole possible criterion of providing the ἔφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism; so it is the only way to climb from the pretheoretical level to a theoretical one. As generally, communitarianism is the care for community, then the more given thinkers (among those identified on pretheoretical level) that are communitarian, the deeper and more momentous is their care for community. So ἔφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism will be such a version that presents the deepest and most momentous care for community. And the level of this care is characterized by communitarians themselves in their writing, what others may recognize by studying their philosophical conceptions.

REMARKS ABOUT IDENTIFICATION ἘΦ’ ἘΝΟΣ OF COMMUNITARIANISM

The matter of this essay is not a close examination of whole communitarian philosophy. International literature is sufficiently fruitful, but for identification ἔφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism such examination is indispensable. In this essay – with regard to size and chosen issue – such an examination, in spite of this the ἔφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism, will be identified. This decision is also justified by another, the most important theoretically, reason.

The scientific value of the chosen method of providing theoretically satisfactory concepts of communitarianism is independent of concrete identifications which would be made by means of this method. The one problem is the introduction of the method and the other is its application. The method will preserve its value even if it would be used in a wrong way. The method can be kept and the output acquired by it can be refused.

The assertion that the ἔφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism is the philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre is made. Although there will be no, as marked, close examination of this
conception, two short arguments for classification issues will be shown. One based on MacIntyre’s words, another on the analysis already did by others authors.

1. Alasdair MacIntyre in *I’m Not a Communitarian, But…* cut himself off the communitarian label, because he asserts that any communitarian attempt to rescue the communities does not have a chance of success in the modern world. Roots of a community’s crisis are deeper and more complicated than communitarians suggest. The rescue requires not superficial correction or reform but complete rejection of the liberal project. MacIntyre cut himself off communitarian propositions because these are examples of too little care for community, because they do not present a sufficient, philosophically deep and momentous care for the community. One can say that MacIntyre cut himself off communitarianism because this communitarianism is not communitarian enough. It turns out that MacIntyre is the only true communitarian.\(^\text{18}\)

2. In their research and comparisons of the conceptions of particular communitarians Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift came to two conclusions that were very significant. These conclusions are very good reasons for classifying MacIntyre’s philosophy as *éφ’ évōς* of communitarianism. We are going to quote them: 1. „Only MacIntyre is explicitly and almost unqualifiedly hostile to liberalism as a general moral tradition. Taylor is explicitly concerned in attacking certain ways of defending liberalism rather than to attack the tradition as a whole. Many of Walzer’s methodological recommendations have a strong liberal ring to them, and Sandel is explicitly concerned merely to suggest that liberalism has limits.”\(^\text{19}\) 2. “MacIntyre and Taylor embody one such way, regarding reference to the community as integral to any account of human selfhood, agency and practical reasoning, but Sandel’s claims are much more limited (…). Walzer invokes the community solely in order to give an adequate account of practical reasoning about justice and about the objects rather than the subjects of justice at that. From this perspective, it can be stated that MacIntyre and Taylor are the most fully-fledged communitarians, with Sandel and Walzer instantiating two variants of that central type.”\(^\text{20}\)

Considering the current state of knowledge in research on communitarianism, the classification of the philosophy of MacIntyre as a *éφ’ évōς* of communitarianism should be beyond any doubt – most of researchers intuitively suggested this solution.

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\(^{19}\) S. Mullhall, A. Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians…*, p. 164.

\(^{20}\) Ibidem, p. 162.
CONCLUSION

A rationally justified method of constructing the definition of communitarianism was introduced. In accordance with this method, the theoretical concept of communitarianism is the έφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism. The output of preceding research has the following consequences:

1. Answering the question asked on pretheoretical level – what is communitarianism – we affirm the position of other researchers.
2. Answering the question asked on theoretical level – what is communitarianism – the έφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism is exemplified and characterized.
3. The presented definition of communitarianism – the έφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism – is so fully substantial that no significant problems exist with making a distinction between communitarianism and other intellectual streams.
4. The έφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism allows to assert that communitarianism is an autonomous philosophical stream. Surely it is not an inner correction of liberalism – if there is something like this, it could be only peripheral case of communitarianism.
5. The presented definition of communitarianism, the έφ’ ἐνός of communitarianism, radically weakens the question whether is given conception still communitarianism or already not? On the ground of this conception the question about common denominator does not make sense. The most typical case is asked about not the common denominator. Nevertheless, this method is rational, coherent and scientifically productive. As John Finnis noticed, when attempting to explain “diluted” cases one should look for the similarities, differences and analogies with regard to function, essence and form between them and the chief case.21 Paraphrasing Finnis, it can be said that there is no sense of denying peripheral cases of communitarianism to be the cases of communitarianism.

21 J.M. Finnis, Prawo naturalne i uprawnienia naturalne…, p. 17.