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Abstracts for Polish-Scottish Philosophy Conference and Workshop 2013

**Conference - Raz, Wall and the Social Forms Argument:**

Perfectionism argues that the state should act in ways which promote the good life of its citizens. That is, it identifies a conception of the human good and instructs governments to arrange social institutions etc. in ways which enable their citizens to realise it. This leads us to consider the question of how we should understand the human good. When identifying a conception of the good, do we say that this way of life is valuable for all humans regardless of how they are historically or geographically located (thus giving all societies reason to promote this good)? Or, do we say that this way of life is valuable only for those who share a historical or geographical context (entailing that this conception of the good should only be promoted in our society and societies like ours)? How one answers this question will determine whether one is what I will call either an ahistorical perfectionist or a contextual perfectionist. In this paper I will focus on contextual perfectionism. In particular I will examine the social forms argument of Joseph Raz and Steven Wall, which claims that human flourishing is constituted by the practices and beliefs prevalent within a society. Having explained the Raz/Wall account in some detail, I will argue that the Razian is faced with a two-horned dilemma. Either he must embrace relativism or he must appeal to an ahistorical account of value. As neither of these positions is acceptable for the Raz/Wall argument, the Razian must find a way of denying that the dilemma holds.