

Szymon Olszynka
PhD candidate
Institute of Political Science and International Relations
Jagiellonian University

Polish-Scottish Philosophy Workshop 2013 presentation proposal

My presentation spans both political philosophy and epistemology. I would like to consider some aspects of Alasdair MacIntyre's project of rational rivalry of respective traditions of moral inquiry. MacIntyre proposes specific understanding of the nature of contemporary moral and political disagreements and puts forward the project, which aims at their rational resolution. I will shortly adumbrate his position and then I will focus on two epistemological aspects of his enterprise.

Firstly, I would like to consider if MacIntyre's explicit rebuttal of Donald Davidson's argument, which denounces the idea of incommensurable conceptual schemes, is perfectly consistent with his own position. MacIntyre insists that the idea of conceptual scheme – which may be associated with the 'tradition of moral inquiry' – is fundamental for the explanation of moral disagreement, while at the same time the essence of his enterprise consists in comparing two apparently incommensurable conceptual schemes, which aims at deeming one of them more rational. Convincing others as well as defending one's own moral position requires using, if not merging, epistemic standards of different conceptual schemes in one logical argument. It potentially poses a threat to the distinction defended by MacIntyre contra Davidson.

Secondly, I would like to consider if MacIntyre's conception of justification is not in essence pragmatistic. It seems that although MacIntyre verbally rejects the conception of truth as warranted assertability as tainted with relativism and perspectivism, he does not give satisfactory arguments that could support opposite standpoint. I will try to show that his historicist-dialectic conception of truth and justification can be envisaged as a kind of idealised warranted assertability and that his position in some important respects is close to 'internal realism' proposed by Hilary Putnam.