

The Moral and the Political in the Philosophy of Bernard Williams

According to Bernard Williams, political moralism entails that morality is prior to the political. He criticizes this view and proposes political realism as a conception that gives more room for "distinctively political thought." Recent literature has discussed Williams' claims in great detail, yet with little reflection on his moral thinking, although this is arguably the field where his achievements are the most impressive. This paper proposes to link up the moral and the political in Williams' philosophy. The particular question to be addressed is this: If morality is a „peculiar institution” that is not identical with our moral life, does his thesis about morality not being prior to the political mean only this institution’s being in need of limitation, or that the political has a distinctively non-moral or amoral status in human life?

Zoltan Balazs

Corvinus University, Budapest