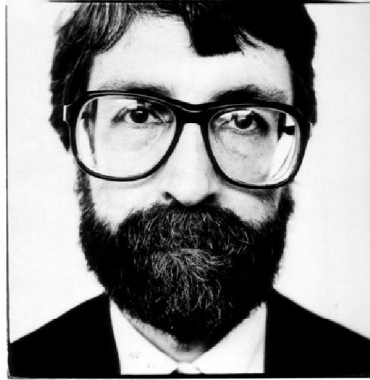




Judging Morally

Seminar series organized by Susana Cadilha, Sofia Miguens and João Alberto Pinto, including a course on J. McDowell's moral philosophy by Susana Cadilha (MLAG)



John McDowell



Aristóteles



David Hume

This is the **moral philosophy seminar** of project *The Bounds of Judgement*. The seminar will start from a course organized by Susana Cadilha, centering on the discussion of John McDowell's articles 'Are Moral Requirements Hypothetical Imperatives?', 'Might There Be External Reasons?', 'Aesthetic Value, Objectivity and the Fabric of the World', 'Values and Secondary Qualities', 'Projection and Truth in Ethics', 'Two Sorts of Naturalism' and the much discussed 'Non-cognitivism and rule-following'.

Porto
Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto
Starting: 16th March 2012
(Fridays, Room 208, 13: 30h – 15: 30h)

This is the **moral philosophy seminar** of project *The Bounds of Judgement*. One main theme will be what we call 'usurpation', and relate to expressivism. From Hume on many philosophers have thought they detected, in various areas of discourse, putative judgements which were imposters. The trouble was that something—usually some sensibility parochial to us—seemed to usurp the world's sole sway over the correctness of judgement. That sort of worry has arisen for ethics, aesthetics, and a host of other things. If, say, ethics were really a domain of judgment, then judging that there are ethical facts would have to rely on some parochial capacity: one available, perhaps, to thinkers like us; but not available to just any thinker, merely in virtue of being a thinker. So, to see how bad that is (Frege apparently took it to be bad enough), one might ask whether there could be judgments available to one sort of thinker but not another. Might alien judgment be utterly different from ours? Conversely, would judgment be at all possible without benefit of (our) parochial capacities?

In a series of essays (cf. Reason, Value and Reality, Part II of McDowell 1998), John McDowell has campaigned insightfully and sensitively against various versions of the view that moral discourse somehow intrinsically lacks that objectivity which is the mark of judgment, so it does not engage with truth and falsity in the same way that, say, scientific discourse does. This seminar will work towards a broader, and we hope illuminating, framework in which that issue may be placed. A general question of this project is 'What *is* the objectivity which is the mark of judgement?', and we intend to answer that question by unfolding that notion of objectivity in several different ways. Our hypothesis is that, on a fuller unfolding, this appearance of absence of objectivity in moral discourse will vanish, along with other preconceptions. Hilary Putnam adumbrates the point here in insisting that if moral discourse lacks this objectivity, then so does science (Putnam 1992, Putnam 1999). We hope this seminar will deepen the appreciation of just what McDowell's work has achieved in that respect in the above mentioned series of essays.

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This will be our starting point for formulating our own approach to the objectivity of moral judgment in terms of 'the parochial' and 'alien thought'. We see things the following way: a thinker is one equipped (in Frege's term) to present particular cases to himself as falling under generalities; ways things are as instancing, or not, various ways there *are* for things to be. One can think, say, that *maias* are [[broom is]] yellow. Beings like us are equipped by something in (in our case animal) constitution. We are thus equipped to bring things under generalities, each of a particular shape, relating to one another to form domains of particular shapes. One might think: what shape these generalities has depends on the nature of *our* constitution, or if its work in equipping us. One might then think: perhaps *thinkers* with different constitutions, working differently, might have been equipped with generalities (ways to think things), and domains, shaped differently from ours. We would then be thinkers *of a particular sort*—one possible sort among others. We do not assume at the start that either assumption here is compulsory. But to the extent that our thinking is a particular sort of thinking, our generalities, so thoughts, particular forms of generalities, or thoughts, we will say that our thinking is *parochial*, and that we are thinkers of a parochial sort. 'Parochial' refers, thus, to a trait of mind, or form of thinking, possessed by a given sort of thinker but not necessarily by all thinkers, thus it refers to what is not required just for being a thinker at all (Travis 2006). We intend to spell out the objectivity we think characterizes moral judgment in terms of 'the parochial', thus rejecting the idea that moral judgments are 'imposters', in that in moral judging something usurps 'the world sole sway over the correctness of the posture'.