

In *Mind and World* John McDowell famously holds that the perceptions of rational beings should not be conceived as non-conceptual acts or states on which judgments are somehow based, but rather as actualizations of conceptual capacities in sensory consciousness. In his new lectures on action he argues that an analogous thesis holds on the side of practical reason. On the view he recommends, the bodily actions of rational agents are not to be understood as events merely caused by conceptual thought, but rather as actualizations of conceptual capacities in a certain kind of bodily movement.

What stands in the way of thinking about action in this way are certain entrenched assumptions about the relation between intention and action. It is widely held that it must be a causal relation between merely mental phenomena in the mind, on the one hand, and merely physical goings-on in the world, on the other hand. In particular it seems we must distinguish between ‘*intentions for the future*’ that are not causally efficacious yet, but will when the time comes cause ‘*intentions in action*’ that, in turn, cause certain *physical movements*.

In his lectures McDowell develops the alternative thought that ‘intention for the future’, ‘intention in action’ and ‘physical movement’ don’t name three different causally related items, but rather three different shapes that one and the same act of the mind takes on as the intentional action enfolds towards completion. And he holds that in order to entitle ourselves to this thought we must come to understand the special kind of knowledge a rational agent has of what she is doing intentionally.

The workshop will be devoted to the discussion of the manuscript of John McDowell’s lectures on action. The point of departure of each session of the workshop will be one of six papers commenting on different aspects of the manuscript.

The format of the workshop will be the following: John McDowell’s lectures on action as well as the comments will be distributed in advance. No papers will be presented at the workshop. The workshop sessions will be devoted entirely to a discussion of each of the papers, with the author of each paper responding to questions and objections.

Participants are required to register with Karin Sturm (karin.sturm@unibas.ch), from whom they will receive the papers to be discussed.

Attendance of John McDowell’s lecture on Friday does not require registration.

PHILOSOPHISCHES SEMINAR
Universität Basel, Nadelberg 6-8, 4051 Basel
T: 061 267 27 70 F: 061 267 27 69
W: www.philsem.unibas.ch

John McDowell’s Philosophy of Action

A workshop with John McDowell



hosted by the
Pro*Doc *Menschliches Leben*
at the Philosophisches Seminar
Universität Basel

sponsored by the SNF

Program

Friday, December 11

17.00 - 19.00

John McDowell

(University of Pittsburgh):

"The Self-Knowledge of an Agent"

Kollegienhaus, Petersplatz 1, Hörsaal 115

Saturday, December 12

10.00 - 12.00

Maria Alvarez

(University of Southampton):

TBA

12.30 - 13.30 Lunch

14.00 - 16.00

Ursula Coope

(University of Oxford):

TBA

16.30 - 18.30

Anton Ford

(University of Chicago):

TBA

Sunday, December 13

10.00 - 12.00

Matthias Haase

(Universität Basel):

TBA

12.30 - 13.30 Lunch

14.00 - 16.00

Adrian Haddock

(University of Stirling):

TBA

16.30 - 18.30

Douglas Lavin

(Harvard University):

TBA