

Department of Philosophy, CUHK

# The Leap to Judgement

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Monday, 30 May 2016

4:30 – 6:30 pm

Room 220,  
Fung King Hey Building

Delivered in English

All are welcome

In a series of works, beginning with his contribution to *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, Bernard Williams offered a trenchant critique of a range of moral theories, including Utilitarianism, Kantianism and Constructivism. These culminated in his discussion, in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, of 'the morality system', which he took to be a pernicious moralistic tendency to which people are prone and from which people ought, if at all possible, be liberated. In this talk I focus on arguably the most fundamental component of the morality system, namely the presumption that moral verdicts can be represented as the products of a comprehensive moral theory. I argue that Williams' guiding conviction was that the ethical aspects of human life resist theoretical analysis and, accordingly, that the urge to theorize in ethics is misguided. Despite his influence, Williams' criticism of moral theory has not been generally well received. I explain how theorists respond to Williams' charge, and then offer a re-interpretation of Williams' insight that circumvents this defense and so rehabilitates his critique.



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