

Ústav filosofie a religionistiky vás zve na veřejné přednášky uchazečů o místo přednášející/ho se specializací na **středověkou filosofii**.

**Kdy: pondělí 14. května 2018**

**Kde: místnost 217, ÚFAR FF UK**

Přednášky

1. 9:00-9:35 „The sense of touch. Scientific perspectives in the scholastics“
2. 9:40-10:15 „Augustine of Hippo as the first philosopher of the will“
3. 10:20-10:55 „ ‚Confusio‘ and ‚praecisio‘ in scholastic thought“
4. 11:00-11:35 „Enjoying good activities: the heart of happiness in Aquinas“
5. 11:40-12:15 „Bridging the gap between the mind and the world: Phantasms as cognitive devices“
6. 12:20-12:55 „How to become a bad Dominican? John Tauler (1300-1361) and his anti-intellectualism“

Jelikož kandidáti nemají znát jména ostatních uchazečů, uvádíme pouze názvy a níže abstrakty jednotlivých přednášek.

Abstrakty:

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### **THE SENSE OF TOUCH. SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVES IN THE SCHOLASTICS**

How do we touch? What are the biological and physiological mechanisms governing our tactile sensation? Natural Philosophy and Medicine in the Scholastics did not ignore this fundamental aspect of human and animal life. Against the background of the growing interest towards the history of senses, I intend to investigate the scientific theories of touch as they were taught at the European universities over the Late Middle Ages and the early-modern times. The present lecture shall trace the guidelines for this research project.

(2)

### **Augustine of Hippo as the first philosopher of the will**

Hannah Arendt has famously said that St. Augustine was the first philosopher of the will. Does this mean that ancient philosophers before Augustine had nothing to say about the will and voluntary action? In fact, some modern scholars have disputed Arendt's assertion and argued that many strands of Augustine's notion

of the will (*voluntas*) can be found in the texts of Aristotle, Epicurus, Seneca, and Plotinus. Yet, it is in Augustine's philosophy that we find the essential characteristics of the "modern" concepts of the will. Even more importantly, Augustine put the will at the center of a philosophical discourse that would continue through the Middle Ages to modern times. When we discuss the freedom of will or the moral responsibility for our actions, the roots of these discussions go back to Augustine. In this talk, I will show that Augustine's oeuvre is where the philosophy of the will was born. Our discussion will start with a brief review of the role of Augustine's predecessors. We will then focus on the main points of Augustine's concept of the will and see how Augustine gradually separates the will from desire and reason. Special attention will be given to the concept of delight, i.e. the capacity of the will to take pleasure in the objects (material or not) that it desires. For Augustine, the autonomy of the will, its freedom, strength and weakness are rooted in the capacity to experience this pleasure. I will also show that Augustine greatly expands functions of the will, connecting it with emotions, imagination, and intellect - almost to the point of equating the soul with the will. We will conclude by discussing the profound influence of Augustine's vision of the will on Western philosophy.

(3)

### **,Confusio' and ,praecisio' in scholastic thought**

In late scholastic thought, the predominant application of the terms "confusio" and "praecisio" in epistemological context was to capture two contrasting interpretations, or in some authors, kinds, of abstraction: viz. the so-called "abstractio per praecisionem" and "abstractio per confusionem". This distinction proved immensely useful in clarifying several other issues: for example, it helped to spell out the ultimate root of the distinction between realism and nominalism, it made possible the formulation of the only theory of analogical concepts that proved capable of coping with the Scotistic critique, and, last but not least, it provided the conceptual means for explaining the compatibility of, on the one hand, the absolute dependency of the intellect on the senses as regards cognitive content, and, on the other hand, its being a cognitive power in its own right and not a mere processor of sensual/sensory data. However, this late application of the two terms is not the only one in the scholastic tradition: confusingly enough, medieval thinkers like Aquinas or Scotus used these terms in the same contexts but often with a different meanings. The aim of

my talk will be to look at these various usages by Aquinas, Scotus, and some later thinkers, and to distinguish and clarify the various meanings of these terms.

(4)

### **Enjoying good activities: the heart of happiness in Aquinas**

According to Thomas Aquinas, there are a variety of kinds of happiness, including perfect happiness, natural imperfect happiness, and graced imperfect happiness. In grappling with Aquinas's account of happiness, perhaps the most fundamental question is: What binds these various kinds of happiness together into a single, unified account of happiness? What makes them all kinds of happiness to begin with? In this talk, I argue against the three answers to this question that one can find in the current literature. I then advance a novel reading, according to which Aquinas pulls a strand out of Aristotle's treatment of happiness and develops it relentlessly – in particular, he fastens onto Aristotle's claim that happiness is an activity with certain characteristics. Ultimately, I argue that, according to Aquinas, in every case, a person is happy if and only if and because she is engaged in and enjoying a genuinely good activity.

(5)

### **Bridging the gap between the mind and the world:**

#### **Phantasms as cognitive devices**

The well-known “mind-body problem”, which is concerned with the relation between the material body and the immaterial (or spiritual) mind, is not exclusive of Descartes, nor of modern philosophy. It is, rather, a philosophical problem that crosses the whole history of philosophy since the Antiquity, from Aristotle up to the contemporary debate. In this presentation, I will aim to tackle it from the medieval perspective, in terms of sense-dependency in the production of the intellectual act. I will specifically discuss the original and decisive views of three medieval thinkers: Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), John Duns Scotus (1265/6-1308) and Durandus of St. Pourçain (1270/75-1334). They develop their own views by commenting on Aristotle's most famous sentence, “the intellect never thinks without phantasms”, that is, what the medievals themselves called the ‘phantasmata’, a term taken directly from the ancient Greek (“intellectus nihil intelligitur sine phantasmata”, Aristotle, *De anima*, III, 8, 432a8ff.).

The question is: How much does the mind depend on the sensory cognitive acts? Phantasms, namely the sensible images of the external world, play an important

role in the theories of cognition developed by the Aristotelian commentators up to the Early Modern Age. I will make two main claims, one conceptual claim and another more historical claim: that (1) each of the three authors develops a particular strategy to maintain the distance between mind and body by producing a theory of the phantasms, and that (2) Durandus' account exerted a greater influence on early modern thinkers.

(6)

### **How to become a bad Dominican? John Tauler (1300-1361) and his anti-intellectualism**

The Dominican order has become famous for its emphasis on knowledge and intellect. Although both intellectualists in their theological and philosophical approach, Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas have formed two important schools which varied in important aspects. The „school of Albert“ –authors like Dietrich of Freiberg, Eckhart of Hochheim, and Berthold of Moosburg – was connected with the Dominican studium generale, founded 1247 by Albert in Cologne. Its specific combination of Aristotelism with Neoplatonic sources gave birth to the specific tradition of the so called „German Mysticism“, and it shows that Thomas' teaching was not followed unanimously. Johannes Tauler, who counts among the most important successors of Eckhart, follows Albert, Thomas, Dietrich and Berthold, but his approach is specific. What is striking about him, is his criticism of all intellectualism, and he goes so far as to avoid all mentions of „intellect“, even in his quotations from authorities. Deeply influenced by Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard of St. Victor, and perhaps also Bonaventura, he developed a distinct voluntarist conception. But, in fact, affectivity was only a preliminary stage for him. Ultimately, he substituted intellect not with will or love but with the Neoplatonic (Proclian) *unum in nobis* which he understood, in the Dionysian tradition, as a supra-intellectual element, or as the Platonic divine „mania“. On the other hand, he always highlighted the necessity of Divine grace, a moment not always emphasized enough in Albert's and Eckhart's conceptions of the „divinization“ of men. Interestingly enough, the later *Theologia Deutsch*, which was traditionally seen as a „Taulerian“ work, combined the Neoplatonic and voluntarist elements in such a way that it put even more stress on the voluntarist side, and it proposed a specific (Nominalist) conception of the relation between God and created beings.