

Oddělení pro studium novověké racionality
Filosofického ústavu AV ČR, v.v.i., Vás zve na přednášku

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On Political Authority and Obedience

The talk considers Peter Winch's novel approach to Contractarianism in his 1990 "Certainty and Authority", which links Hume's criticism with arguments from Wittgenstein's *On Certainty*, to take on the desire-belief conception of action: the view that reasonable action is based on justified belief. He argues that rationality is itself based on primitive and habitual trust and acceptance, i.e. *obedience*, of authority. Far from grounding community, rationality, itself bound up with these habitual reactions, is thus implicit in the practices of the community and these life-practices form the foundation for any reasonable decision and action.

Against this I argue that: 1) primitive reaction and habit cannot make sense of obligation, (and hence obedience), since it ignores obligation's conceptual and free character; 2) the genealogical account of obedience running all the way from family to politics, cannot deal with political authority understood as rule of law; 3) law is inseparable from theoretical, indeed philosophical, reasoning whose demand for *logon didonai*, for justification, presupposes doubt; 4) that many 'ordinary' institutions and practices of our society are theoretical in origin and may at any point be subjected to further 'rational' inquiry.

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