

Agata Bielik-Robson

SEMINAR:

***Amor Mundi*: The Turn towards the Worldly – from Duns Scotus to Hannah Arendt**

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	SPRING Semester All Years
HOURS	30
FREQUENCY	3 x 45 every two weeks

THE COURSE CORRESPONDS TO TOPICS: Contemporary philosophy, history of ideas, social thought, political thought.

ASSESSMENT:

- The course is available to all students (General course open to all students)
- The course to be conducted in English
- Credit requirements: active participation in classes
- Time of classes: Tuesday, Room 158
- Begins: 17:00
- Duration: 17:00-20:00 (4 x 45 minutes) every two weeks (for a total of 30 hours)
- Commencement date: October 19th

COURSE AIMS AND CONTENT:

The aim of the seminar will be to create an outline of the *philosophy of the world* or the *philosophy of the secular*. “The turn towards the worldly” was the term coined originally by the 13th century nominalist British theologian, John Duns Scotus, whose thought paved the way to the secularization-wordliness as the ruling paradigm of the modern era. The genealogy of secularity – the “love for the world” – is thus *theological* and we will keep it in mind while reading the main modern procosmic thinkers: Duns himself, Shakespeare (the idea of a “brave new world” in *The Tempest*) Spinoza (the beginning of radical immanence), Hegel (incarnation of the Spirit in the World), Nietzsche (the world relieved of the “shadows of transcendence”), Heidegger (the notion of wordliness as *Weltlichkeit* and “thrownness”), Rosenzweig (the World as the separate foundational element) Arendt (the concept of *amor mundi*), Hans Jonas (the project of a “sacred secularity”), and Derrida (the *foi originaire* as “the faith in the world”). The main questions which the seminar hopes to address will be: to what extent is the secular modernity rooted in the nominalist *theology of the world*? Can the secular become thoroughly secularized and forget its theological genealogy? Is our “investment in the immanence” (Jonas) dependent on a vestigial transcendence? Is the concept of the world descriptive or does it hide a dimension of a normative project? Is the philosophical materialist orientation of modern philosophy at odds with such theological interest in the worldly – or, perhaps, not at all?

KNOWLEDGE TO BE ACQUIRED:

Participants are expected to acquire: (1) a basic orientation in the current issue of the philosophy of the world; (2) a knowledge of arguments used in the polemics between various philosophical and theological schools referring to the concept of secularity.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES:

Knowledge:

- Improved knowledge on the place and role of the humanities, the social, exact and natural sciences in early and contemporary culture;
- Comprehensive understanding of the terminology of the humanities and social sciences and knows how to use it;
- Knowing in depth the relationships among different humanities disciplines studying works of art in culture and the sociological context of cultural activity;
- Knowing and understanding the main methods of analysing and interpreting products of culture in conjunction with tradition;
- Having good organized knowledge on the main trends in philosophical and social thought in a historical and contemporary perspective.

Skills:

- Selecting and interpreting information from different textual, iconographic and electronic sources;
- Analysing artistic, philosophical and sociological texts using the appropriate research tools, and presenting the results of such work;
- Basic research skills enabling the formulation of research problems from the humanities, philosophy, literature, and arts;
- Basic skills in using interdisciplinary research methods and tools to analyse phenomena of contemporary culture;
- The capacity to take part in conferences, symposia and discussions on literary, artistic and philosophical topics.

Social Competence:

- Understanding the dynamics of scientific, cultural and social development and keeping up with new research methods and paradigms;
- Understanding the principles of tolerance and cultural differences;
- Understanding the importance of Europe's cultural diversity and heritage;
- Participating actively in cultural and social life taking advantage of all forms offered by media, the arts and science

TIME & VENUE:

IFiS PAN (Staszic Palace) – Tuesdays fortnightly: 17.00 – 20.00.

The Syllabus.

1. *Scotus on the Turn towards the Worldly: the Beginning of the Secular.* Readings: John Duns Scotus, *Sermons* (excerpts) and Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The*

- Borderland of Philosophy and Theology.* Questions: What sparked the late medieval “interest in the world”? Why did the world emerge as an object of a new theological reflection?
2. *Shakespeare’s Brave New World: On the Birth of the Secular Hope.* Readings: William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* and Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Axial Civilizations and World History.* Questions: What does it mean to have hope in this world? What are the necessary conditions for the emergence of the belief in the perfectibility of the world?
 3. *Spinoza: Invention of the Immanence.* Readings: Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics* (excerpts) and Gilles Deleuze, *Expressionism in Philosophy.* Questions: How does Spinoza develop the Scotian principle of the univocity of being? What is radical immanence as the new definition of the world?
 4. *Hegel’s Procosmism: The World as the Arena of Spirit’s Incarnation.* Readings: Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (excerpts) and Alexander Magee, *Hegel and the Hermetic Tradition.* Questions: What does it mean when Hegel announces that the world is *capax Dei* (capable to “carry God”)? How should we understand the theological background of Hegel’s ultimate commitment to the world, especially in his definition of Spirit’s incarnation as “the rose on the cross of the actual”?
 5. *Nietzsche: The World as the Time of the Shortest Shadow.* Readings: Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (excerpts) and Alenka Zupancic, *The Shortest Shadow.* Questions: Does the world need a vestigial “shadow of transcendence”? Does it dissolve into nothing in the “hour of the noon”?
 6. *Heidegger: Being-(Thrown)-in-the-World.* Readings: *Being and Time* (excerpts) and Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion.* Questions: How to interpret Heidegger’s notion of *Geworfenheit* (thrownness)? Is Jonas right in implying an anti-cosmic Gnostic connotation to Heidegger’s concept of the world?
 7. *Rosenzweig: The God-Man-World as The “Jewish Trinity.”* Readings: Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption* (excerpts) and Benjamin Pollock, *Rosenzweig’s Conversions.* Questions: Why is Hegel not enough to secure the procosmic orientation of modern thought? Why do we need a stronger “anti-Gnostic” defense of the world?
 8. *Arendt: Amor Mundi and the Human Condition.* Readings: Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, as well as her *Denkstagebuch.* Questions: what does it mean to have a “love for the world”? In what way does our attitude to the world “help the world”?
 9. *Jonas: The Sacred Secularity of the Lurianic Myth.* Readings: Hans Jonas, “Searching for a God after Auschwitz” and Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (the chapter on Isaac Luria). Questions: Why is the Lurianic kabbalah the only possible metaphysics after Auschwitz? In what way does it foster the idea of the world as a part of a “sacred project”?
 10. *Derrida: To Have “Faith in the World.”* Readings: Jacques Derrida, *The Counterfeit Money. Given Time II* and Agata Bielik-Robson, “The Matter of Faith. Zizek versus Derrida.” Questions: is the world a “fiction” (*fictio mundi*)? And if so, can it be ever *verifield*?