

Special workshop of

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THEORY AND HISTORY OF SCIENCE

on

Phenomenology, Affectivity, and the Embodied Mind

23th April 2015
Sedláčkova 19, 306 14 Pilsen
room RJ-209
11:30 – 17:20

Výzkumné centrum pro teorii a dějiny vědy – CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0138



evropský
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EVROPSKÁ UNIE



MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY



OP Vzdělávání
pro konkurenceschopnost

INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

Program

11.30– 13.00 **Giovanna Colombetti** (University of Exeter):

Affectivity and the Scaffolded Mind

13.00-14.30 **lunch**

14.30- 15.10 **Julian Kiverstein** (University of Amsterdam):

Empathy and the Responsiveness to Social Affordances

15.10- 15.50 **Maarten Coolen** (University of Amsterdam):

Mediated Immediacy and the Embodied Self: Merleau-Ponty and Plessner

15.50-16.00 **Tea break**

16.00-16.40 **Miloš Ševčík** (University of West Bohemia):

The Arts in Space and Space in the Arts: Patočka's Conception of the Spatial Arts

16.40-17.20 **Heleen Pott** (Erasmus University Rotterdam/Maastricht University/
University of West Bohemia):

Emotions, Agency, and the Embodied Mind: William James as Phenomenologist

Abstracts

Giovanna Colombetti

Affectivity and the Scaffolded Mind

Abstract:

In this talk I present some work in progress on the notion of “affective scaffolding”. I first introduce Kim Sterelny’s (2010) concept of “scaffolded mind” and present it as a more productive framework than the more famous “extended-mind thesis” for analysing the relationship between mind and world. Then I apply the notion of the scaffolded mind to affective phenomena, with particular attention to the way in which *material items* scaffold our affective states. I distinguish various senses in which material scaffolds can be *incorporated* into our affective lives. We can talk, for example, of “physiological incorporation”, but also of “incorporation into the body image” and perhaps of other forms of affective incorporation as well. A further related issue I address concerns the extent to which incorporation requires the *transparency* of incorporated objects – namely, whether objects that are (affectively) incorporated are necessarily always absent or un-noted in experience.

Julian Kiverstein

Empathy and the Responsiveness to Social Affordances

Abstract:

The direct perception theory of empathy claims that we can immediately experience a person’s state of mind. I can see for instance that my neighbour is angry with me in his bodily countenance. I develop a version of the direct perception theory of empathy which takes this perceptual capacity to depend upon recognising in what way the other person is responsive to the affordances the environment provides. By recognising which possibilities for action are relevant to a person, I can thereby understand something about the meaning they give to the world. I come to share something of their perspective on the world, and this allows me to grasp based on my perception of them something about their current state of mind. I argue that shared affect plays a central role in this perceptual capacity. Shared affect allows me to orient my attention to possibilities for action that matter to the other person. I end by briefly discuss the implications of this view of empathy for the disturbances in so-called “cognitive empathy” that are found in people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder.

Maarten Coolen

Mediated Immediacy and the Embodied Self: Merleau-Ponty and Plessner

Abstract:

What it means to be an embodied self is a phenomenon that cannot be understood without examining the body's relatedness to itself. Following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the structure of our incarnated subjectivity appears to be such, that we become familiar with our body *via* the world towards which we are (or our body is) intentionally directed. Our self-relatedness is conditioned by the otherness of the world we are open to. But, in accordance with Helmuth Plessner's view, human bodily existence imposes upon us the ambiguity of always and conjointly being a living body [*Leib*] and *having* this body as a physical thing [*Körper*]. Being a self means meeting the permanent demand for finding a settlement for this relation between the lived body and the body-thing. Humans have to take upon themselves the task of realizing themselves as self-sustaining bodies that mediate their immediate dependency on their environment. I want to show why Plessner's philosophical anthropology enables us to get a fuller understanding of what it means to be an embodied self than Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology allows us, and why it is possible to subscribe to the former without having to give up important elements of the latter.

Miloš Ševčík

The Arts in Space and Space in the Arts: Patočka's Conception of the Spatial

Arts

Abstract:

In this talk, I will concern with Patočka's thematization of the relationship between the arts and space, particularly these arts that Patočka refers to as spatial. I will start from Patočka's conception of space as a structural factor of being. Being in space means both inclusion and detachment; space therefore means the 'original inside', by which a human being is included in the context of prominent relations. I will be also concerned with Patočka's reflections on the means of being related to space in sculpture, architecture, and painting. I will seek to demonstrate that in Patočka's conception the work of sculpture documents our ability to step into space and explore it; works of architecture document the fact that we are enclosed in a visual horizon, which provides evidence of the validity of our 'original inside'. Painting is an art that demonstrates the very essence of space, which is detachment, emptiness.

Heleen Pott

Emotions, Agency, and the Embodied Mind: William James as Phenomenologist

Abstract:

Without the body there would be no emotion, according to William James - emotions are 'feelings of bodily changes'. This definition is commonly seen as the starting point of all modern theories of emotion. But what actually did he mean by 'feelings' and *how* precisely is the body involved in experiencing emotion? Despite more than a hundred years of extensive debate, there is no consensus. In the 20th century, James' view was widely seen as compatible with a reductive version of scientific naturalism; he was criticized by philosophers (among them Wittgenstein and Sartre) for conceptualizing emotion as a non-intentional bodily sensation. In the 21th century, Damasio and Prinz praise him for his evolutionary grounded theory of emotions as 'gut reactions'. But even his admirers think that James's theory cannot easily account for complex cognitive emotions and how they relate to human action and agency. In my paper I argue that these standard criticisms are incorrect. I show that rereading James's work in the context of early phenomenology can help clarify how his pragmatism anticipates the view that the human mind is radically embodied & the structure of consciousness is fundamentally affective.