



ESSE-8: LONDON 2006

29 August – 2 September 2006

S54. Mind, Knowledge, Learning 1300–1700

Friday 1 September: 2.30-4.30pm

Convenor: Kathleen E. Dubs (Ružomberok Catholic University)

Email: kedubs@axelero.hu

Co-convenor: Fabiny Tibor (Pázmány Péter Catholic University)

Email: fabiny_tibor@hotmail.com

Research on the history of English words and texts dealing with mind, knowledge and learning relates to such philosophical, psychological, and religious questions as what knowledge is, how it is obtained, and which human faculties are involved. With proposals from cognitive semanticists and historical linguists, as well as literary scholars, we hope to develop a sense of changes in the understanding of such concepts as mind and feeling, including distinctions which develop between “knowledge” and “wisdom”, resulting in the late medieval debate over the relationship of reason and faith, and the 16th century debate between revelation and speculation in acquiring knowledge.

The Role of Knowledge in Bathsua Makin’s “Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen”

Violetta Trofimova (Institute of Foreign Languages, St Petersburg)

Bathsua Makin, an English educator of the seventeenth century, was influenced by Anna Maria van Schurman and Jan Amos Comenius in her ideas of knowledge. Her best-known work is “Essay to Revive the Antient Education of Gentlewomen” (1673). Educated women are useful to their husbands and children, and finally to the whole nation. The worst of nations are those where women are most undervalued. There are two main aspects in her conception of knowledge. The first one is human knowledge, the other one is spiritual knowledge. Human knowledge leads to spiritual knowledge. Acquiring knowledge is a systematic and rational process.

Martin Luther, “Wittenberg” and Hamlet

Fabiny Tibor (Pázmány Péter Catholic University)

Martin Luther (1483-1546) lived two generations before William Shakespeare. Both were creative geniuses who contributed to the making of Early Modern Europe. This presentation will demonstrate that in Shakespeare’s play “Wittenberg” is not an accidental place but a thought-provoking theological metaphor. Luther’s theological paradoxes, as formulated in his *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518), find striking parallels in Shakespeare. The motives in *Hamlet* that most resonate with Wittenberg theology include

“the masks of God”; the discrepancy of appearance and reality; the *deus absconditus* (the hidden god), hiding under the mask of the opposite; the paradox of wisdom and foolishness; suffering as a means of self-knowledge.

The Limits of Reason in Reginald Pecock's Works

Tamás Karáth (Pázmány Péter Catholic University)

This paper first discusses if Bishop Reginald Pecock's writings offered an alternative to the contemporary paradigm(s) of knowledge. His arguments did not represent a breakthrough in the concepts of cognition, though some appear revolutionary, for which he almost paid with his life. The second question related to Pecock's fashioning his own authority investigates whether Pecock's opponents perceived his challenge only as a power struggle for authority, or interpreted it as a new menacing paradigm of knowledge. My analysis is based on a close reading of Pecock's works, Thomas Netter's passages from his *Doctrinale Fidei* and Archbishop Bourghier's *Monicio* condemning Pecock's books.

Semantic Changes of “Minde” and “Mood”

Kiricsi Ágnes (Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church)

There are significant turning points in the history of the words *_gemynde/minde_* and *_mod/mood_* in the 14th century, a linguistically turbulent time. Sometime in the 1300s, *_minde_* started losing its original meaning, “memory,” and broadened its semantic field of referents to “mind” in general. On the other hand, *_mod_*, the word denoting the mental faculty, also changed its meaning significantly, and became “mood.” The aim of this paper is to explore the extra-linguistic factors triggering and supporting this process, the cultural and social changes of the period that might have contributed to this semantic change.

‘Forms’ of the Imagination in the English Renaissance

Michele Stanco (University of Naples)

My paper intends to focus on the notion of ‘form’ and its relationship with the imaginative faculty in the English Renaissance. Throughout the Renaissance, the imagination had an ambivalent reputation. Since imagining something meant seeing an object which did not have any actual referent in the perceptible world, the imagination could either be exalted as the capability of seeing something which transcended sense perception, or be condemned as the representation of false and deceptive images. A common image, possibly originating from Plato's *Theaetetus*, was that of a ‘wax tablet’ on which the ‘forms’ of the objects were impressed. This metaphor was reformulated in various ways by Renaissance writers, including Shakespeare. Its analysis will thus prove essential to an understanding of the Renaissance view of the imagination and theory of knowledge.

John Dee and Simon Forman: Mind, Knowledge and Learning in Elizabethan England

György Szönyi (University of Szeged)

Elizabethan England is a test case to interpret some aspects of mind, knowledge, and learning in the late Renaissance period. That era was characterized by an epistemological crisis involving paradigm shifts in investigation (transitory subjects such as alchemy and magic); the accumulation of knowledge (the scientific revolution); the institutionalization of learning (universities, academies, secret societies); and in the roles individuals played in the mentioned processes (self-fashioning, patronage). Among Elizabethan intellectuals the case of John Dee, mathematician and magus is well known. In my paper I offer a parallel portrait of Dee and a lesser known, but equally representative figure of the age, Simon Forman.