



PŘEDNÁŠKOVÁ SÉRIE LECTURE SERIES

Mark Windsor (Masaryk University)

Feeling through Things

Some objects we value because they afford a sense of connection with distant people, places, or events of special importance. Visiting Canterbury cathedral, say, you encounter the place where, in 1170, Archbishop Thomas Becket was murdered by the knights of Henry II. Knowing that you are standing in the very place where Becket's blood was spilled gives the past event a sense of tangible reality. In a recent body of work, Carolyn Korsmeyer has developed an account of such experiences in terms of an imperceptible property of genuineness. Against Korsmeyer, I argue that genuineness has no descriptive role in characterising the historical features of objects that afford experiences of being 'in touch with the past'. I offer an alternative account of the phenomenon in terms of an imaginative activity that represents what an object is historically connected with and that makes the object special as part of the object in the present. One imagines of the site of Becket's murder Becket being murdered. This mode of engagement can, I suggest, be thought of as an empathy-related response. 'Empathy' comes from the German 'Einfühlung', which literally means 'in-feeling' or 'feeling into'. What is distinctive about the cases in question is that what is being felt into is absent: one feels through the object ('feels' both in the sense of physical proximity, represented in imagination, and affect) to what it embodies in virtue of its past.

09/06/2022 | 15.00 CET

Meeting room of the Centre for Medieval Studies, Jilská 1, Prague 1