

Uppsala, HT 2014/Remes

*Conceptions of Human Beings: description of the course*

Philosophical theories rest on sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit views on human nature. This course offers an entry point to the conceptions of human beings presented in the Western history of philosophy from Socrates and Plato to early modern philosophy, Kant and beyond. What is a human being? What, if anything, is our shared nature? What is my individual being or nature? Who or what am I? We will go through a selection of sources, many of them presenting central and influential, some of them less familiar, and sometimes even surprising, stances. Thematical emphasis is on six different aspects: I. Reason and the rational self; II. Will, desire and aim; III. Individual identity; IV. Body; V. Relation to and place within nature; VI. The communal and social self. Especially two lines of development arise out of the materials: the gradual naturalization of the notion of human, and the growing individualization of how people understand themselves.

The course consists of introductory lectures and shared seminars where we read and analyse together historical sources. The lecturers are Pauliina Remes (Uppsala university) and professor Mikko Yrjönsuuri, a specialist on medieval philosophy and Descartes (Jyväskylä, Finland) and a guest scholar at SCAS.

The course book, used mainly as a background reading, is Leslie Stevenson & D. L. Haberman 2009 *Ten Theories of Human Nature*, OUP. (Preferably this fourth edition or newer, but older ones can also be used.) In addition there will be a study pack ("kompendium") containing the historical sources we will discuss. A preliminary collection can be purchased from the department a couple of days before the beginning of the course. This will be complemented by handouts and further texts during the course.