

MitMA Robiglio Audio

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SPEAKERS

Will Beattie, Andrea Robiglio, Ben Pykare



Will Beattie 00:00

I'm Will Beattie.



Ben Pykare 00:01

I'm Ben Pykare.



Will Beattie 00:02

And we're two graduate students at the University of Notre Dame's Mediaeval Institute.



Ben Pykare 00:06

We're here to chat with students and scholars of the mediaeval world about what they do and how they came to do it.



Will Beattie 00:12

So who have we got today, Ben?



Ben Pykare 00:14

Today we're sitting down with Dr. Robiglio, who is professor of history of philosophy at KU Leuven. And we'll be talking about his upcoming lecture at the Mediaeval Institute.

—



Will Beattie 00:26

Well, then let's go and meet him in the Middle Ages.



Ben Pykare 00:30

Dr. Robiglio, thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with us this afternoon. We are very pleased to have you with us here at the Mediaeval Institute.



Andrea Robiglio 00:39

Thank you very much for having for having we meet with you.



Ben Pykare 00:45

We wanted to start our conversation... you have published widely on many different topics. And so we're curious when someone asks you, maybe in a less formal situation, what it is that you do, how do you typically answer that question?



Andrea Robiglio 01:03

Well, certainly from an academic point of view, my area of specialisation is mostly mediaeval philosophy. However, I wouldn't say that the level, "medievalist" is one of those that I promptly use to define my identity as a scholar. I prefer and I tend to say that I am philosopher and when I say to "which kind of philosophy?" a historian of philosophy. "Which kind of history of philosophy?" Rather pre-modern history. "Why pre-modern history is very large, which part?" Well, from late antiquity to the Renaissance. In this sense, I tended to avoid the definition of being a medievalist. Also because it has to do with the training. My training as a medievalist was a byproduct of my studies at the Catholic University, Milano. But my Masters was on contemporary thought: on existentialism, in the 30s of the 20th century. I graduated in what is called "theoretical philosophy." So pure philosophy is not history of philosophy. And from the historian I remember, one of my first participations in a workshop, just after my PhD, I was called by a senior colleague a "bastard medievalist." So, having been called a "bastard" as a medievalist, I tend to avoid to define myself as a medievalist. So this is...



Ben Pykare 02:45

I understand, interesting. So what was it that first attracted you to philosophy then, as a field, if that seems to be your prime love?



02:55

Yeah. Well, I would say that it is originally, rather a negative choice. So philosophy seemed to me that field of study which concerns the useless. Interesting topics that are not immediately relevant but that leaves the door open to many directions. And for instance philosophy is a

relevant, but that leaves the door open to many directions. And for instance, philosophy is a kind of study that, even though its generally in the area of the humanities, it is a kind of study which is not strictly literal. Its a kind of study open to sciences, open to other lines of investigation. And so what I found attractive is to leave the door open. Not to choose for a path that would have excluded other things. I had a passion for poetry, for music, but yet I was also interested in mathematics and in its history. So the choice of philosophy was a non choice. It was the way to avoid to determine too early what I wanted to do.

A

Andrea Robiglio 04:12

Concerning the Middle Ages and the interest for the Middle Ages. I think that it's very difficult for me to identify one single motivation. There are layers of motivation. Certainly having been born in a little village in the south of Piedmont, where the intact mediaeval European Centre where you have lots of prestige under your eyes, etc. These cannot be avoided as certainly constitute elements. However, is a very general and implicit one. I would say that... I could go on and say other things, but if I want to isolate something I would say when I was beginning high school I 14 or 15, and the publication of the "Name of the Rose" by Umberto Eco. Umberto Eco was from the same region. My professor of Latin, Franka Bonomo. She had been a student, classmate of Umberto Eco at the liceo in Alessandria. So, Umberto Eco came once in class. At the time he was not so famous as he would become later, of course. He had just published the second novel, "Foucault's Pendulum." But even in the second novel, which I read first (and then I read "The Name of the Rose") there is the Templars and the process against the Templars, so the Middle Ages plays a very important role also in "Foucault's Pendulum." And certainly Eco and his scholarship were very seducing for me. Because on the one side he was a philosopher engaged with contemporary debate: semiotics, philosophy of language, communication, etc, mass media. On the other side he had written a dissertation on Aquinas and the Middle Ages had remained constantly a sort of a red thread in his publication. And in 1974, he had published just after '68 and all the turmoil" which also implied at the academic level a dismissal for Mediaeval Studies" he wrote a praise of Aquinas, which was extremely witty, because it stressed all the elements that usually are not stressed in the picture of Aquinas: that he was a radical thinker, he was someone who went against many conventions, etc, etc. So I would say that Eco both as a novelist, but also in his essay, and the fact that he was, in a way, a familiar figure for this reason I briefly sketched, is probably the single most important influence that brought me to remain with this interest in philosophy. But [also] to look more carefully into the Middle Ages as an area of experiences, which was manifold, sophisticated, complex and less known than other periods.

B

Ben Pykare 07:50

Fantastic.



Will Beattie 07:52

There's a lot to discuss there. And I know we want to talk a little bit about Aquinas in more detail and his relevance to research and why he's such an influential and talked about figure. But I just want to pick up on this thread on Eco, and the fact that, as you say, he became

quite famous, certainly one of the more famous medievalist scholars in the world. And I was wondering if you have any thoughts on why those books, "Foucault's Pendulum" and "The Name of the Rose." What was it about them, do you think, that resonated with audiences?

A

Andrea Robiglio 08:27

This is very hard to say.



Will Beattie 08:29

Yes

A

Andrea Robiglio 08:30

However, I will try to play an attempt to answer saying that, with what has been called "postmodernism," one of the features of this movement is not really... is rather a family of actions, of theories, but they have some common denominators. One is the dismissal of the agenda of modernity, the idea of a big narrative, consistent, progressive. It is a sort of agenda of Enlightenment and so on and so forth, which still remains even today. But postmodern thinkers as writers and literary critics have really shown all the fragilities of these attempts. Well, the Middle Ages, the mediaeval period no matter how far back in time shares in some of those features to resist an easy description according to some broad category that [is global]. There are intellectual historians of the Middle Ages who try to do so, of course. But as soon as you go to the sources, you immediately see that there are different cultures, there is a continuous, permanent transfer of knowledge that goes on among languages and cultures. Even many institutions were not yet in a form as they've been established [since]. Moving from Europe, I came here and when entering the US I'm subject of US law, as in Belgium I'm subject of European law and Belgian law. But in the Middle Ages this was not obvious at all. There was a concept of "personal law." But if you now think of big corporations, etc., we are going back to this idea where the law is no more the law of the state, but it's a sort of "private" law of the corporations, say. So we have some phenomenon today, let's say from the late '60s with an acceleration until today, which allows us to see, let's say, the anomalies and the rupture in what we consider the standard narratives. And [in] these the Middle Ages acquires an actuality. Probably people are not necessarily making the comparison (the comparison, it may be, [is] even not necessary). But when you read those sources, when you enter this world, when you enter the Middle Ages, you see that you have a sort of shock of recognition that something is so different, and still this difference helps you to orientate, better, or even to cast doubt or some assumption that for long has been rolling in scholarship. But I think that today, we are gradually going out of it. So we are back in the early '80s, when Eco writes "The Name of the Rose." What now is evident in Mediaeval Studies was not so evident [then]. But I just mentioned before, on Saturday I was in Chicago, and I stopped there two days before coming to Notre Dame. Also, to join in the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the publication of the "Heresy of the Free Spirit" by Robert Lerner. And in the discussion that came out was exactly how this book is in a way of course it's a serious scholarly effort which resists any actualization. However, it's hard not to see one of the speakers commenting even made an explicit reference to the hippie culture in California and etc. to this moment. Well as you know, in the novel of Eco there are these spiritual movements among the Franciscan. They have

aspects that for those living in those in Italy, were reminiscent of what was going on with some political movement, like the Brigade Rosse and so on. It is a sort of... so, I would say he was able, "he was lucky maybe" but he was able in a very early stage to see the germs that were already there or what now is generally understood. So nobody would now have problems in intercepting this, let's say, multiplicity of the Middle Ages and so on. So I think that this is probably not the reason of the success. But certainly, the fascination could be connected to that; of this strange way in which postmodern culture and pre-modern culture share in the dismissal of modernity as a value in itself. Modernity may have value many valuable things, but in itself, just qua modern is not per se a value. Well, this idea is obviously shared by the pre-modern, but it's also one of the features of the postmodern.



Will Beattie 14:45

Right. So in a sense, Echo, of course, was very forward thinking in that way, predicting some of these later movements in intellectual thought, and also in a strange way, I suppose... in that same way that people say we've always been mediaeval. We've never left the Middle Ages or we've returned to it. But in a very new way, yeah.



15:08

And perhaps through the, through the genre of novel, right. Being able to reach a wider audience with that idea of humanising and bringing close a lot of these very mediaeval ideas as something that are relatable, and that feel closer than perhaps people might initially think when they think of mediaeval thought, mediaeval life. They have their stereotypes that Eco's work, right, across his work, was able to bring to the present, right? In very effective ways.



15:39

I will also add, as a footnote to this picture, the fact that the movie, "The Name of the Rose" featuring a very, very effective Sean Connery in the role of William of Baskerville, contributed a lot to make of what was a successful book, a long seller, what was a best seller, become a long seller. I think also, thanks to the movie and, and to this visibility that it acquired.



Will Beattie 16:14

Right. Yeah, I wonder if you see that as well with other modern "medievalist" books, like of course, the Davinci Code. It being one of the classics, right, with the Tom Hanks adaptation? They just keep on selling.



Ben Pykare 16:28

Yes. So to focus now on your work, your upcoming lecture. Maybe this is too hard to talk about as everything is connected to everything else. How do you as a scholar, when you receive an invitation like this [to speak at Notre Dame], begin to think "okay, this is perhaps the topic.

What do I want to talk about?" Are you already working on something relevant to this? Or do you have something from before that you can bring back out? Or is a completely new idea called for when you get an invitation such as this?

A

Andrea Robiglio 17:04

Oh, okay. Well, as sometimes the invitation comes also with a specific request to work on a particular author or topic. And that kind I have, if I accept, I have to accept also the topic, which usually if they ask a certain topic, it is because I had already written on it in a way. So usually it's not too painful, those invitations. But it's particularly nice to be invited and having the freedom to choose the topic. In this sense, I really, the choice was very easy [for Notre Dame]. It was just the work I'm doing. So I'm presenting what I'm working on now, what I have already published. So it's not just a beginning work in progress, in which you could say, "well, you're coming here, please give us some substance, if you're just beginning it maybe interesting for you. But why the Medieval Institute should pay for a trip to someone, a couple of nights in a hotel, to just listen to the wandering using what can be..." No, there is already research done, but it's still an investigation that is going on and is connected to a book that I hoped it was already published for this date. But partly for my delay in sending back the manuscript, partly for the pandemic delay, it is not yet published. But is now let's say [sic], which is a book on Dante. It is written in Italian, but the title is "A Contribution to Romance Philosophy." So I wanted to make a point on these, which is not... certainly is not of a paramount importance, however, it is an aspect that seems to me not trivial, not yet particularly explored. And so it may be interesting for you to listen. The choice was just, since I had no particular request, I am doing what I'm just doing.

B

Ben Pykare 19:18

Well we're excited to hear what you've been excited about and working on. For perhaps our listeners who aren't as familiar with some of the works of Dante... I can't imagine... Growing up in Italy, how is Dante presented as a literary figure and more, growing up? Is that something that you encountered pretty young? Is that something perhaps in high school? I guess, when did you first encounter Dante? Did you immediately take to him?

A

Andrea Robiglio 19:50

Well, let me make a little digression

B

Ben Pykare 19:53

Yes.

A

Andrea Robiglio 19:54

If you look on the landscape of academic jobs, not only in Italy, but even outside Italy. It is a fact that many medievalists are Italian, or born in Italy or partly located in Italy. And one could say, well, there is this love for the Middle Ages in Italy, but I think that there is a very

say, well, there is this love for the Middle Ages in Italy, but I think that there is a very institutional point that all the students of the liceo have to read that the Divine Comedy. And the Divine Comedy is also, among many other things, it is also an introduction into the Middle Ages, and a quite sophisticated introduction. But coming here and mentioning Dante is also intimidating. I'm thrilled because Notre Dame"but I heard that I should pronounce it Notre Dahm, right?



Will Beattie 20:47

Well, I do it wrong. I stick with the British pronunciation I just say Notre Dahm, but it's probably Noter Dame. How do you say it?



Ben Pykare 20:57

It's funny when I think about it in abstract, it's Notre Dahm. But if I'm talking about say, like, how did the football team do or whatever it's Notre Dame. So it varies.




Andrea Robiglio 21:08


Ah well you will cut this part. But here is one of the best centres in North America of Dante studies. There are a lot of contacts with Europe. I.e., I know a lot of the people, almost virtually all the people, that are working on Dante that are acquaintances and friends of mine. So this is a very good place to work on Dante. And it's a good place from the beginning because the Zahm collection goes back almost to the foundation, to the really to the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. And these are collections concerning Dante, which is in the holdings of the library of Notre Dame [...] And Dante is is an interesting author also because it [is able] to be studied from different perspectives: as a poet, as a philosopher, as a theologian. And it can be a synoche, in a certain way, of Mediaeval Studies. What it may ... I have not really a clear idea on that. There is, so to speak, a predominance of Dante in Italian Studies that inevitably produces also lots of repetitions and publications. I was just making these reflections with a friend a couple of years ago; if a scholar today would like to read all that is published on Dante only in English, he wouldn't have the time, technically, to do it. I wonder whether it is it is really something necessary. If we really need another dissertation [on Dante]. I think that the problem is that there's also a connection with a particular institutional job market in which a dissertation on Dante means that someone can teach on Dante more or less everywhere. They need someone to teach them Dante while it's not obvious that someone has to teach on [sic] or Francesco de Barbarino. But in any case, these studies are very strong and I'm really honoured to be here. Also for you to be graduate students in the Middle Institute. It's quite, it's quite nice.





Ben Pykare 21:10


No, it's fine. Oh, yeah. Yeah. We are very blessed with different people who are very skilled here. And there are, yeah, as you said, Dante studies here are rich, and impressive. We recently had a series of lectures on Dante, and that was very enjoyable. Again, just to see the different angles and different kinds of scholarship that Dante invites, as you said. Really, the whole of medievalists can gather on a figure, like Dante, or Dante's world, right.

 Andrea Robiglio 24:27
Exactly.

 Ben Pykare 24:28
Different studies, in some ways relating to him. You mentioned the phrase and I want to have you define it for us a little bit more and explore it with us: "Romance philosophy."

 Andrea Robiglio 24:42
The first of November 1972, so precisely half century ago, in Venice, a great midwesterner passed away: Ezra Pound. And a young Ezra Pound in 1910 wrote "The Spirit of Romance," which was the result of a series of lectures on literature, a sort of introduction to European literature, but much focused on the early European literature that for him was courtly literature. The troubadours. Dante's originally the beginning of... before that, I would say. And in the very first pages he has this formula; "the history of literary criticism is largely the vain struggle to find a terminology to define something." And I wonder whether the history of philosophy is not also largely a vain struggle to find the terminology to define something. So, to find a terminology is also an attempt to to help people to go out of some trodden path and to see from different angles. It may be the terminology is not very significant, someone else can find one that's better. So, the idea "Romance Philosophy" is just made on the example of the well known syntagma "Romance Philology," which is a discipline etc. I'd make another digression but I hope the thoughts go together.

 Will Beattie 26:39
No, please do.

 Andrea Robiglio 26:40
And I think in one of his last texts before he passed away. In the preface to the second edition of "Orientalism," Edward Said... It's a very interesting text, the this preface to the second edition, because on the one side it takes a bit of distance from the reception which he considered betrayed the original project in many senses And then he insists how he came about with that idea. He makes a list of influence going back to German scholarship, etc. And the last in the list, but the rhetoric if you read, you clearly see that the last is the first. So what he put last is what was really the most influential. He said, "and the German Romance philologists, and he mentioned Eric Auerbach, Leo Spitzer and Ernst Robert Curtius. Well, this is interesting, because if I look at my experience as a reader of Dante, many scholars about me certainly work like those of Gerson as being important reading. But where I really got the original insights, the most productive hypothesis, what really brought me to write something to try to give a contribution, were indeed works of Auerbach or Curtius. And those who are not historians of philosophy, those were Romanists. Even a kind of Romance Philology which doesn't exist anymore with that sort of feature. And so, the first motivation was "why these

kinds of scholars are those who help me the most? Why not?" And I started to think which kind of approach of angle, or from which competencies they came to be able to isolate certain research questions that turned out to be so productive and so fruitful. And so, it is a sort of depth to, to these that I use this expression, "Romance Philology." But it has also to do with that culture, which is the culture studied by those German Romance philologists. It is a multilingual culture. So it is not the opposition to vernacular Latin, you know, the study of McGinn on vernacular theology. This has been a very important contribution in the '60s and '70s, and even later, to show that there is another theology which is not the theology in Latin of the school, which is no less important if you want to add even your research [addressed to Will] on the apocalyptic literature, which is a kind of vernacular theology.



Will Beattie 26:50

Absolutely.



Andrea Robiglio 27:07

And then there were other scholars who stressed the monastic, which is even a different. But I wanted, a bit, to try to isolate a sort of layer, a sort of network, which has a certain unity. And, for instance, it is multilingual. So it's not vernacular against Latin, but these Latin AND these other languages. It is extra scholastic, but it is not anti-scholastic. And usually the people involved in it had some contact or add been educated" or even some of them are active in the university, etc. It has an encyclopaedic ambition, but what we could call an "sectorial" encyclopaedia. So it is an encyclopaedia in which certain parts are really quick and compressed, and others are more connected with what we could call "anthropology," "philosophical anthropology" or "politics." [They] are much more expanded and certain problems of the motion problem of love, the problem of election, recognition, nobility became present everywhere. So there are a series of features that allow even an approach that gives room to a sort of first person approach, a lot of use of the narrative literary genre to express these kinds of contents. And these allow [us] to recognise a sort of culture. [What] is the utility of recognising this culture? Well, if this pattern really exists as I came to... I'm now convinced even though research can produce further evidence for that... these allow us to multiply the mediations. So, for instance, Dante; if we look at Dante from this perspective" as a Romance philosopher" then we could study [his place] in scholastic debates of theory that we find in the theological summa etc. But we should assume that they are mediated by this culture, they are not immediate.



Will Beattie 32:52

Okay.



Andrea Robiglio 32:53

In other words, it is "identity" "we come to your first question" his first identity as a thinker, he is not the schoolman, he is not the preacher, he is not... he is the courtly... this sort of figure which I faux de mieux call the "Romance philosopher."



Will Beattie 33:20

Right.



Andrea Robiglio 33:21

And so it is an attempt to let a pattern emerge. Of course, this pattern doesn't exclude other patterns.



Ben Pykare 33:31

Yeah.



Andrea Robiglio 33:31

And what became interesting in it is to see the level of integration of these with the others. And we have to recognise there are authors for which this pattern doesn't give any added value, and just create confusion too. But in other cases it is illuminating because it explains why certain authors write certain things, say certain things which seem otherwise surprising or not obvious at all. And it allows us also to ask questions that sometimes are not asked.



Ben Pykare 34:06

Yes.



Will Beattie 34:07

So this is really a very multi-layered kind of approach. And a lot of it's about identity, and it's networks of transmission and how these kind of romance "ideals"â€”if we can say thatâ€”these these kinds of influential texts are circulating. B, I mean, it makes me think a lot of this "rhizomatic" approach: it's not this OR this, it's this AND this AND this AND this and it just keeps proliferating.



Andrea Robiglio 34:35

But with a given hierarchy or an order of priorities. So the end... because there is a tendencyâ€”which is perfectly understandableâ€”to make a claim in favour of pluralism (also because it's very nice, generally speaking). But if it is made just in a sort of plain and unsophisticated way, it doesn't really help from a scholarly point of view. Because, okay, for instance one of the attempts in the early 2000s; why, we do not speak any more mediaeval philosophy, we start to speak of "mediaeval philosophies." As such it is that is a little step in the negative sense. It casts doubt on the idea there is one way of doing philosophy, period. But

apart from that, in the constructive, hermeneutical analysis it gives very little. Because, okay, there are many philosophies and then there are many [...] may we still speak of philosophy, or [do] we have to call each of these philosophies with the name and each has its own story and period. So, this is a bit of the challenge... the challenger behind [it]. And as you said, it is a question of transfer and tracing in concrete ways how this happened in certain... I [will] give just an exampleâ€”that may be I will quote, again, I don't know, because for the lecture, I have not written any lecture, so it will be an impromptu speech. So maybe I [will] say these again, or since I had already said the here I want....

B

Ben Pykare 36:34

Oh no, no, everything's on tape!

A

Andrea Robiglio 36:34

You may remember that, in his famous book that I think has been also translated into English (but I never checked), "La civilisation de l'Occident m'edi'val ," by Jaques Le Goff, he speaks of the Crusades. And he makes this sort of... the only fruit of the Crusades was the "abricot." I don't know, the "apricot" is the name in English.

B

Ben Pykare 36:35

Yeah,

A

Andrea Robiglio 36:58

The Syrian apricot, to say that basically the Crusades brought nothing. Brought pain and violence, but brought nothing to Europe. Well, this is, of course, Le Goff is brilliant and this image is brilliant. First of all, is not true, this. Because it seems that the apricot came via Andalusia, Spain independently from the Crusade.



Will Beattie 37:27

Right.

A

Andrea Robiglio 37:29

And so this is the first point. But the second point is that if you look at this culture that I'm trying to map, there is a fascination in all the authorâ€”for instance, I will try to speak of Dante, Margaruite Porete, Thomas Aquinasâ€”there is a form, of course, different in each, of Orientalism. So there is this fascination which of course, with Jerusalem for a Christian... but this is strictly connected with the Crusades. It is not a concrete result on the political level, but on the, let's say, imaginary level, it is extremely powerful because the chivalric literature from the 12th century until the 14th, even 15th century, has these image. Take the figure of Francis

of Assisi. How powerful for him was this myth of going to the Crusades that he will do [it] in his own way, let's say [by] sublimating... But the idea of the knight that goes... this is absolutely fundamental to understand Francis of Assisi. And even this idea, the chivalric dimension in Francis of Assisi, is something that, in my opinion, should be better studied. But if you study from the perspective of the Franciscan, or let's say what came after, you don't see those aspects that are so evident. If you look at him in his web of references of the literature, and of even the way in which for instance he became such a fascinating figure for Dante.

B

Ben Pykare 39:26

Yeah. So, for a figure—you mentioned some big names, right—for a figure like Aquinas, right, who has been claimed by so many fields and put in so many different boxes—some helpful in their time, some less so. How would you introduce a titan like Aquinas in this context of Romance Philosopher?

A

Andrea Robiglio 39:54

Yeah, in many ways. For instance, Aquinas—and the research in the last 20 years as has made a lot of progress—gave an unprecedented... well, probably not totally unprecedented because his master Albert the Great is certainly another key figure in this respect... attention to the texts of Islamic philosophy. [It was] integrated in key moments of his own thought. For instance, in the "commentary on the sentences" when he speaks of the beatific vision, which is the highest goal to which the human intellect can aspire, the human being can aspire. He adopts exactly what Averroes has elaborated for the intellectual vision, natural intellectual. He adapts [it] for the supernatural model. But this is extremely, if you think a moment, extremely daring. Of course, there is a transformation, but you transform a material that many other authors would never think of using that respect. Second, he—this is well known, [and] this I [will] probably mention in the lecture—if you look at the "Summa," which is more personal work, not so... it was not the most read in his days, and it was certainly not the most read immediately after his death. But it is more personal work for sure. You have this section in the "prima secunda" on the human emotions, the passions.



Will Beattie 41:47

Right

A

Andrea Robiglio 41:48

This is something that exists in no other theological Summa before. But it's so... it's an elephant in the room. So, you see all these writings in which the problem of passion either was treated as something negative to be condemned in the section [on] vices, or Aquinas before speaking of virtues and vices does this treatment, which is a book in itself, on the human patient. Again, why, why he does that? You know that one of the poets of the Sicilian school was Renaldo de Aquino. There was a moment in scholarship where they thought that this Renaldo de Aquino was the brother of Thomas Aquinas. This seems nowadays no more. There is no evidence for that. But we have evidence that Aquinas, Thomas, has a brother named Rinaldo who was put to

death because he was considered to have participated in the famous conspiracy against Friedrich the Second together with Pier delle Vigne etc. Well, let's say a moment... I don't know if this happens still today in the United States, but if you choose a certain name for a son, it may say something of the cult or culture of the parents. Well, Renaldus is the name of the "Chanson De Gest." It is a hero of the "Chanson De Geste." So if you name one of your kids "Renaldus," maybe it is like today, I don't know, if you name [him] after a certain... there are people who are much influenced by movies and they give these improbable names to their children—poor them, they have to carry [it] for the rest of their lives. But, so... Thomas was in contact with a culture which he didn't ignore. And when he had the task of writing this "Summa" he could have thought something along the following reflection: "Well, either we do as if these debates on love etc. [don't] concern us, but then which pastoral care can we hope to do if we ignore what people care [about], what people sing in the street? The text condemned by [sic] 1277 is the "De Amore" of André le Chapelain which is not a scholastic text, it is an extra-scholastic text. And so the idea is to integrate these words in order to... and this integration is something that other schoolmen contemporary or before him, didn't do. And it is a quite revolutionary move, which in my opinion can have these motivations of the awareness of this culture and the the topics... like the topic of love. The entire treatise on the Passion by Aquinas is constructed... the fundamental Passion is the "passio amoris," the passion of love, which is no more considered as negative in itself. It is the fundament of all those passions. He says that the passion of love is in itself neither good nor bad. And this seems a quite neutral statement. But to make a neutral statement in a context, and [I'm] speaking of the academic theological context, in which there was a clear condemnation of love as passion is not neutral. So being neutral when nobody's neutral, is quite a bold move. It is not neutral. And this is an example.



Will Beattie 46:14

So Aquinas is, philosophy was, in many ways, very grounded, practical philosophy. It's one that responded to the real, or the real world, the real emotions that people felt, the real passions they had. And as you say, he was also engaging with—and this as the grossly oversimplify things—but essentially pop culture, right? In the same way, as you say, people name their children after their favourite romance figures, just like now there are 1000s of poor kids are named "Daenerys" after the character from "Game of Thrones," which didn't go down too well in the end. But it's the same kind of idea, right? And I think that's another moment where you see that, getting back, right back to what we were talking about before: how the mediaeval and the postmodern are so similar. Once again, we're seeing another example where actually the mediaeval and the postmodern culturally are very, very similar. We have the same habits, we have the same interests, we do the same things we both celebrate, you know, the text we love in a similar way. And it influences the philosophy as well for some, I guess at the time "radical" thinkers. interesting. Well, that this has been a fantastic conversation. And thank you so much, again, for for taking the time to sit down with us. If our listeners want to find out more about you and your work, is there anywhere that they should go?

A

Andrea Robiglio 47:38

Well, if they are students in search of a good place to graduate before coming to the Medieval Institute for a PhD they should consider Leuven. There is an international programme all in English from the Bachelors up to... there are no taxes. It is almost free. The level is quite good,

despite my presence. So that is a is a good place to get... we have a lot of North American students. We have 66 countries represented this year in the international programme. It is a very large international programme. And so well, maybe the advertisement [is] not for my personal research, but let's say for the institute where I work. I'm very happy to be there. And this also plays... now we have also an agreement, you may know my research unit and the Mediaeval Institute's have an exchange agreement, you may know that it has been signed two years ago. So it's even easy for PhD students to decide "okay, for two, three months," etc. This agreement unfortunately doesn't apply to Master students etc., because it's so different; the fees... But, but let's say to put Leuven on the map of Medieval Studies I think is interesting and useful.

B

Ben Pykare 49:00

Indeed, yes. Well, again, thank you so much for taking the time to sit down with us. And we'll meet with you all next time in the Middle Ages.