



Blaise Pascal

400 years since the birth of the prodigy.

Lectures in Studium Catholicum

Ritarikatu 3 b A Helsinki 26.10.2023 at 14.00-16.30

Entrance free, advance registration mandatory.

Registration

Blaise Pascal, 19 June 1623 – 19 August 1662,

French mathematician, physicist, inventor, philosopher and Catholic writer.

Blaise Pascal was a child genius. He was educated by his father, a tax collector in Rouen. To help his father, while still a teenager, Blaise invented and built a calculating machine called « Pascaline ». Later Louis XIV gave him a royal privilege to design and manufacture calculating machines in France.

Pascal was also a pioneer in the natural and applied sciences. Pascal wrote in defense of the scientific method and made important contributions to the study of fluids and clarified the concepts of pressure and vacuum.

To prove the debated claim that the air pressure decreases the higher you are above the ground, Pascal measured the air pressure in mountains and valleys. « Pascal » is today the basic unit of air pressure. In 1646, Blaise and his sister Jacqueline became supporters of Jansenism, a religious movement within Catholicism. Following a religious experience in late 1654, Pascal began writing influential works on philosophy and theology. His two most famous works date from this period: « Lettres provinciales » and « Pensées », the former about the conflict between Jansenists and Jesuits. The latter contains Pascal's wager, a probabilistic argument for God's existence. In that year, he also wrote an important treatise on the arithmetical triangle. Between 1658 and 1659, he wrote on the cycloid and its use in calculating the volume of solids.

Throughout his life, Pascal was in frail health, especially after the age of 18. He died just two months after his 39th birthday.

Program

14.00	Markku Äärimaa Associate prof.	Opening words
	Agnès Cukierman Ambassador of France in Finland	Greetings of the ambassador
	Stéphane Schorderet Director of the French Institute in Helsinki	Greetings of the French Institute
14.15	Laurence Plazenet Director of the Blaise Pascal International Center	The legacy of Blaise Pascal
15.00	Break	Coffee provided by Studium Catholicum
15.30	Johan Stén Associate prof.	Mathématiques de Pascal
16.00	Père Gabriel	Pascal's View of the Rational Foundations of Religious Knowledge and Ethics
16.30	Simo Brummer Managing director	Closing words

Our speakers



Professor Laurence Plazenet

Professor of 17th Century French Literature, Honorary Member of the Institut Universitaire de France, Deputy Director of the LCSH Doctoral School, Director of the Center International Blaise Pascal. President of the Société des Amis de Port-Royal and winner of the 2012 European Union Prize for Literature. (photo: C. Hélie Gallimard)



Associate prof. Johan C.-E. Stén, born in 1967. D.Sc. in Engineering, Helsinki University of Technology in 1995, Ph.D. in Mathematics, University of Helsinki in 2015. Technical research in 1995-2015, presently lectures of History of Mathematics at the University of Helsinki. Research interests include electrodynamics, special functions and the history of the exact sciences.



Dominican Brother Gabriel Salmela. Master of theology, University of Helsinki (Philosophy of Religion and Theological Ethics), STB Institut Catholique de Toulouse (Theology of Thomas Aquinas), Diploma of French language and culture/University of Lille. Director of Studium Catholicum's scientific library and cultural center since 2014, ordained priest of the Catholic Church in 2015.

Organizers of the seminar:

Finnish-French association for technical and scientific research
Institut français – Finlande
Studium Catholicum Helsinki