

Call for Abstracts

“What’s the Matter with the Form? A Pluralistic Dialogue on the Notion of Form”

Graduate Conference

17th - 19th November 2022 Leuphana Universität, Lüneburg

Keynote speaker

Prof. Andrea Pinotti (Università degli Studi di Milano)

Submission deadline: 29th June 2022

The concept of form is a cornerstone of the western philosophical tradition and has crossed its ‘weft’ throughout all its history, remaining a crucial term also in the contemporary debate.

Explicitly introduced by Aristotle and his hylomorphic conception of reality, the problem of the form comes always with its double: the matter (or the content). The couples-concepts of form and matter - and the dominant role accorded to the form - have been the heart of the debate in the medieval scholastic and remained focal points in modern philosophy. It is with Kant, that the way of thinking the relation between form and matter has radically changed: with the introduction of the transcendental form a new and fecund concept of form has arisen and multiple directions have been made possible: from Goethe’s Morphology and the bright spectrum of neo-Kantianism to Husserl’s phenomenology and the dialectic between transcendental form and *Lebensform* in Simmel’s work.

Nonetheless, the concept of form has always undergone many critiques and the attempts of going beyond it have been a constant in the history of philosophy. Empiricists like Bacon, Locke or Hume had radically put in discussion the form-matter dualism. It is in recent years, however, that the philosophical debate offers perspectives that claim with insistence the necessity to dismiss the idea of the dominance of the form in favour of a new kind of materialism.

The galaxy of the neo materialism emphasises how matter is “alive,” “lively,” “vibrant,” “dynamic,” “agentive,” and thus active: the vitalist-materialism generated from the Deleuzian interpretation of Spinoza, the negative materialism (speculative realism, object-oriented-ontology) and the performative new materialism, are all perspectives that radically question the form and declare that the matter is “thinking” and “organising”, and therefore relinquish any form of universalism or transcendentalism.

Themes of the Conference:

The conference aims to embed itself in such a vibrant debate analysing three main themes on the notion of form: The concept of social form in Marx - which realises a historicisation of the transcendental locating the transcendental in the social structure -, as the tradition of the Frankfurt School starting from Sohn Rethel and, especially, the so-called "New Marx Reading" ("Neue Marx-Lektüre") has pointed out.

The role that the form plays in the modern and contemporary debate in Aesthetic. We can think here, for example, of formalism as art theory (Russian formalism) and its critical relationship with modernism, but also the analyses of Adorno, where the form - as the irreducible individuality of the artwork - gains the fundamental function of criticising the existing reality.

Finally, the critique on the form in the context of cyberfication and digitalisation of reality, a process that produces a highly techno-mediated environment where the concept of form seems to be reducible to the concept of format, leaving no space for a transcendental approach on it (A.Rouvroy). But also in this regard, the discussion on the form is far from being over and the form far from being relinquished.

General Aim of the Conference:

Assuming as background this large theoretical horizon, the conference - spread in three working days - aims to bring a multifaceted philosophical approach to 'old and new' interpretation and conceptualisation of the form.

The aim is to create a fecund space of discussion on a concept that is as crucial and classical/ as mysterious and variable and has not expired yet its philosophical fascination and importance.

Themes of the Contributions:

We invite the submission for proposals, which thematise the concept of form in any number of its instantiations or its critique, including the possibility of its relinquishment. In accordance with the conference's main focus of interest, we invite contributions to fill three thematic panels, thus devoted to the following macro topics:

- The concept of form in contemporary Aesthetic
- Social forms in Marxist tradition and critical social theory
- The critique and the reconceptualisation of the form in the debate on the digital

Call for Abstract:

Proposals for presentation shouldn't exceed 500 words and should be thought for a 20 minutes intervention, followed by one hour of collective discussion moderated by an expert of the relative area of research. Please submit your abstract together with a brief biography (100 words max) by filling this FORM (<https://forms.gle/Gx1NVmKvMDMHqHQa6>) .

In case of acceptance, a longer abstract (max 2500 words) will be required to be shared with the expert of the field before the conference.

Important Deadlines:

29th of June – Deadline for the submission of the abstract

30th of August – Notification of acceptance

20th of September – Deadline for the submission of the long abstract

Send any questions to: matter.form.leuphana@gmail.com

Organising Committee:

Dr. Chiara Stefanoni (Università di Bergamo, Italy)

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