

Immunity and Modernity: Picturing Threat and Protection (Leuven, 27–29 May 15)

Leuven, Belgium, May 27–29, 2015

Stijn De Cauwer

International Conference Immunity and Modernity: Picturing Threat and Protection (27 -29 May 2015)

Arts Faculty, Institute of Philosophy, KU Leuven, Belgium

Keynote speakers: Roberto Esposito (University of Naples), Bracha L. Ettinger (European Graduate School), Arne De Boever (California Institute of the Arts), Johannes Türk (Indiana University Bloomington).

This conference is organized by the Department of Literary Studies, the Centre for Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion and Philosophy of Culture and MDRN.

In the past decades, 'immunity' has become an increasingly important notion in the study of crucial features of modernity. Several influential theorists have adopted the term 'immunity' to describe the attempts, whether positive or problematic, of a community to protect itself from the displacing effects of modernity. Niklas Luhmann wrote that modern society became increasingly pervaded with immunity mechanisms. Donna Haraway and Ed Cohen have indicated the transmission of a legal and militaristic view on immunity to the individual and social body as the birth of modern biopolitics, while at the same time arguing for the necessity to rethink immunity as a shared process. Jacques Derrida has analyzed diverse phenomena, from sovereignty to democracy, in terms of autoimmunity, which is both a threat and a chance. Roberto Esposito theorizes the complex and sometimes (self-)destructive relationship between immunity and its etymological counterpart community. Peter Sloterdijk describes the spheres of shared interiority that people develop to protect themselves against a threatening 'outside'.

The notion 'immunity' encompasses the diverse attempts that are made to draw a mark between self and other, communal and 'foreign', normal and pathological, order and disorder in times of crisis and anxiety about the coherence of the self and/or the community. Yet, theories of 'immunity' will also radically question the ways such divisions are marked and rendered operative. The aim of this conference is to clarify the diverse, and sometimes mutually conflicting, attempts to theorize the problem of 'immunity' and their possible relevance for the clarification of modernity as an ongoing project, as well as the tendency towards (self-)destructive excess that has always been a part of it. The way the arts (literature, architecture, visual arts...) have taken up the problem of immunity, from artists who have attempted to picture immunity mechanisms to artists who want to problematize the prevailing immunity discourses, will also be explored.

For information and program: <https://immunityandmodernity.wordpress.com/>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1401528920167734/>

Registration: immunityandmodernity@gmail.com

Exposition in the context of the conference:
<https://immunityandmodernity.wordpress.com/exhibition/>

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Wednesday 27/05/2015

9:30 – 10:00: registration and coffee

10:00 – 10:15: Opening remarks by Bart Philipsen (MSI 02.28)

10:15 – 12:00 Panel session

Session 1: The Politics of Immunity (MSI 02.28)

Chair: Arne De Boever

- Pieter Vermeulen (KU Leuven): How Should a Person Be (Impersonal)? Immunity and the Novel after Modernity
- Greg Bird (Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada), Jon Short (York University, Canada): Political Responses to Immunity in Esposito and Agamben
- Anya Topolski (KU Leuven): Towards a European Communitas: a Political Identity Beyond Exclusion

12:00 – 13:00: Lunch

13:00 – 14:30: panel session

Session 2: Immunity and Modernity (MSI 02.28)

Chair: Jonathan Sholl

- Robert Alexander Gorny (Delft University of Technology): The Immunization of Paris
- Johanna Sluiter (New York University): Forgetting the Future to Remember the Past: Memory's Monumentalization and Reconstruction in Postwar Berlin
- Kim Hendrickx (KU Leuven, Life Sciences & Society Lab): Immunity and Testimony: on Europe's Intestinal Flora

Session 3: Contextualizing Theories of Immunity (MSI Museumzaal 02.08)

Chair: Greg Bird

- Giorgia Bordoni ("La Sapienza" University of Rome): Derrida and Esposito
- Mateusz Burzyk (Jagiellonian University Cracow): Immunity: Esposito's Correction of Arendt
- James Kirwan (Kansai University Osaka): Immunity and the Infection of Thought

14:30 – 14:45: coffee break

14:45 – 16:15: panel session

Session 4: Immunity and Prevention: Reflections through the Arts (MSI 02.28)

Chair: Ine Van Hoyweghen

- Vittoria Bordo (University of Düsseldorf): Roberto Esposito's Immunity as operative ontology:

Aesthetic potentialities

– Daniel Blanga-Gubbay (Aleppo) and Lars Kwakkenbos (Kask Gent): Presentation of the book *The Time We Share*, published by Mercator Fonds at the occasion of the 20th edition of the Kunstfestival des arts. Presentation of the chapter *Prevention and the introduction: Living at a Preventive Time*.

Session 5: Immunological Sounds and Language (MSI Museumzaal 02.08)

Chair: Pieter Vermeulen

- Anne Gleonec (Institute of Philosophy, Prague/ Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic): *Immunity Between Metaphor and Analogy: a Critical Reading of Roberto Esposito*
- Naomi Waltham-Smith (University of Pennsylvania): *The Sound of Immunity*
- Mikolaj Ratajczak (Polish Academy of Sciences): *Language – an Immunitarian Dispositive*

16:15 – 16:30: coffee break

16:30 – 17:30: Giovanbattista Tusa (director of the Institute for Critical Media and Cultural Studies at the Global Center for Advanced Studies): *Le Vivant: on Derrida and the Living Apparatus* (MSI 02.28)

Chair: Greg Bird

17:30 – 18:00: Break and change building

18:00 – 19:00 keynote lecture Roberto Esposito (Scuola Normale Superiore): *Community, Immunity, Biopolitics* (Kardinaal Mercierzaal, HIW)

Chair: Joost de Bloois

19:00: reception (reception room HIW)

Thursday 28/05/2015

9:00 – 9:15: coffee

9:15 – 10:45: panel session

Session 6: Visualizing Immunity (Justus Lipsiuszaal)

Chair: Gert Meyers

- Angela Mengoni (University IUAV Venice): *Visual Strategies of Incorporation: Cremaster by Matthew Barney*
- Kamil Rusilowicz (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin): *Beasts of the Southern Wild: Between the Topographical Map of Biopolitical Theory and a Modal Map of Artistic Representation*
- Daniël de Zeeuw (Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis): *Privacy, Paranoia and Conspiracy Theorizing: Immunitary Crises in the Age of Omniscient Networking*

Session 7: Literary Immunities (MSI Museumzaal 02.08)

Chair: Bart Van Den Bossche

- Monica Jansen (Utrecht University), Ronald de Rooy (University of Amsterdam): *Biopolitics of the "Security Bubble": Immunity Mechanisms in Italian War Novels set in Afghanistan*
- Emmanuel Rota (University of Illinois): *the Debate on Immunity among the Italian Romantics*
- Corina Stan (Duke University): *Poetic Injustice: The Loss of Immunity in the Contemporary Novel*

10:45 – 11:00: coffee break

11:00 – 12:00: keynote lecture Bracha L. Ettinger (European Graduate School): Metaphors of Compassion for Rethinking Immunity: Carriance and Copoiesis in the Subreal. (MSI 91.10)

Introduction by Catherine de Zegher (director MSK Gent)

Chair: Anneleen Masschelein

12:00 – 13:00: lunch break

13:00 – 14:30: panel session

Session 8: Theorizing Immunity and Protection in Germany (Justus Lipsiuszaal)

Chair: Johannes Türk

- Hannah Richter (University of Kent): Governing the Excessive State: a (Bio-)Political Reading of Luhmann's Immunology
- Bert van de Ven (Tilburg University): Sloterdijk on Immunity and Responsibility
- Arne De Winde (KU Leuven): Anti-Spenglerianism, or the Phantasm of Intellectual (Self-)Infection

Session 9: Immunity and Law (MSI Museumzaal 02.08)

Chair: Jon Short

- Stefania Varnero Rawson (University of Notre Dame Australia): The Immunitarian Dynamics of Collective Disengagements
- Susanna Lindroos-Hovinho (Queen Mary University of London): Count Me Out – The Possibility of Legal Withdrawal
- Michele Fiorillo (Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa): From Katechon Towards a Liberating Power. Beyond the Immunitas Paradigm of Violence, through Benjamin-Schmitt-Machiavelli and Italian Theory

14:30 – 14:45: coffee break

14:45 – 16:45: panel session

Session 10: The Biopolitics of Ressentiment (Justus Lipsiuszaal)

Chair: Jens De Vleminck

- Howard Caygill (Kingston University London): Anti-Colonial ressentiment? The Legacy of Fanon
- Sjoerd van Tuinen (Erasmus University Rotterdam): The Philosopher and the Priest. A Typology of Immune Strategies
- Pieter Lemmens (Radboud University Nijmegen): The Proletariat, or the Poisoned Populus. Ressentiment, Technicity and Technopolitics in the Work of Bernard Stiegler

16:45 – 17:00: coffee break

17:00 – 18:00: keynote lecture Johannes Türk (Indiana University): The Future of Literature: Immunity and Experience (Justus Lipsiuszaal)

Chair: Bart Philipsen

18:30: conference dinner (De Troubadour)

Friday 29/05/2015

8:45 – 9:00 coffee

9:00 – 10:30: panel session

Session 11: Immunological Policies (Justus Lipsiuszaal)

Chair: Sjoerd van Tuinen

- Bernice L. Hausman (Virginia Tech University): Immunity and Vaccination Resistance: Illuminating Modernity and its Discontents
- Mauro Fazzari (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne), Mattia Gallo (Université Paris Ouest Nanterre, EHESS), Mauro Turrini (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne): Immunizing the Political Body, Immunizing from the Political Body
- Marjolein Oele (University of San Francisco): Openness and protection: a philosophical analysis of the placenta's mediatory role in establishing a home for self and other

Session 12: Terror, Shock and Protection (LETT 07.08)

Chair: Stijn De Cauwer

- Michiel Rys (KU Leuven): Threat, Defense and Terror in Georg Büchner's Danton's Death.
- Mihail Evans (Institute for Advanced Studies Bucharest): Autoimmunity and Modernity: Habermas, Derrida and Terrorism
- Laura Katherine Smith (KU Leuven): Baudrillard's Immunity: Reversibility and Seduction

10:30 – 10:45: coffee break

10:45 – 11:45: keynote lecture Arne De Boever (California Institute of the Arts): Financial Immunity (Justus Lipsiuszaal)

Chair: Pieter Vermeulen

11:45 – 12:00: closing remarks

12:00 – 12:30: performance collective Evelin Brosi: Gamper-Maschine #4: iMunity (Justus Lipsiuszaal)

14:00 – 17:00: Doctoral seminar with Bracha Ettinger (MSI Museumzaal 02.08) (only for registered students)

Reference:

CONF: Immunity and Modernity: Picturing Threat and Protection (Leuven, 27-29 May 15). In: ArHist.net, May 20, 2015 (accessed Jul 18, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/10356>>.