

Bergson and his postmodern and immanent legacies (London, 26–27 Feb 11)

Charlotte de Mille

CALL FOR PAPERS

Bergson and His Postmodern and Immanent Legacies
A conference to be held at The Courtauld Institute of Art

Friday 25 and Saturday 26 February 2011

Confirmed Speakers: Howard Caygill (Goldsmiths University of London),
Laura Cull (Northumbria University), John Mullarkey (Kingston
University), David Cunningham (University of Westminster)

In the past two decades there has been a resurgence of interest in Henri Bergson's work in various areas of philosophy and cultural studies, in part stimulated by the growing popularity of recent writers who have addressed his thought. There is now a large critical body of material relating to these fields, especially ones connected to the neo-Bergsonism of Gilles Deleuze. This conference seeks to address the timeliness of Bergson's writing for contemporary thought on the immanent categories of rhythmic duration, perception, affectivity, the body, memory, and intuition.

This 'Bergsonian Turn' also reflects larger movements. The cultural and economic chastening of society in the past year may be understood in relation to a general realisation of its unsustainability, but to what extent might a turn away from circuitous histories to the material object be related to this shift? Questioning the validity of history can arguably be understood as a defence against the unrepresentational nature of our recent past.

Concomitantly, since 1988 contemporary French thinking has been distinguished for its interest in immanence, in particular in the work of Alain Badiou, Gilles Deleuze, Michel Henry, Francois Laruelle, and Michel Serres. In concluding remarks in an anthology of critical texts published in 2005, Jae Emerling likewise noted the rich potential for an immanent turn in Art History. Yet despite Emerling's notice, few have attempted to integrate this philosophical shift into art historical or art critical practice.

The intention of this conference is also, therefore, to stimulate reflection upon this shift in philosophy towards the Bergsonian paradigm of immanence and to encourage responses to it from art historians. Does it give a new method through which to approach the subjects of our writing? What does Deleuze's writing on Francis Bacon, Henry's writing on Kandinsky, or Serres' writing on Bonnard add to art historical discourse? How do we assimilate these cross-disciplinary texts into our own practice ? both in research and in teaching within the institution? What might we lose by pursuing such alternative avenues for interpretation? Lastly, what does this return to the immanent, to matter as movement, and to its affect upon the viewer say of contemporary culture more broadly?

Themes may include but are not restricted to:

- art and its conceptualisation
- materiality
- visualisation of thought
- representation
- unresolved loss in culture
- historicity
- writing on art

Abstracts of 250 words are invited for 20 minute papers. Proposals should be sent to Charlotte.Demille@courtauld.ac.uk by 31st October 2010.

Reference:

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