

Ernst Cassirer's Post-War Afterlife

Call for Abstracts/Papers

«Ernst Cassirer's Post-War Afterlife» is a work shop that will take place at the Centre Universitaire de Norvège à Paris (CUNP), Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme 54, Bd Raspail, from 18th to 20th of April 2018.

The background

As we know, Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) was one of the most celebrated philosophers of his time, in Europe as well as across the Atlantic – but although his passing garnered quite some attention (e.g. Schilpp 1949), even his most important works were soon all but forgotten and remained, for too long time, too little read and studied.

This has all changed. As of 2008, his complete works are now available in a critical edition and many of his most important posthumous manuscripts are also available in the *Nachlass*-edition. Since the mid 1980s, Cassirer's thought has experienced what is often described as a “renaissance”, and Cassirer's intellectual achievement has since been investigated from a wide range of perspectives, including the biographical, the philosophical, the historical and the sociological.

All in all, important results have been achieved, and we are now witnessing a “third wave” of studies pertaining to Cassirer and the Cassirer renaissance, but much still remains to be done. For example, an exhaustive assessment of Cassirer's often unnoticed influence on philosophical debates in the inter- and postwar periods is still largely missing.

The Idea

The idea behind this conference is to highlight the hidden, almost forgotten or just “hinted at” reception of Cassirer in general, with the aim of heightening the historical awareness of the influence that Cassirer has in fact had on important thinkers, and on disciplines like art history, cultural anthropology, sociology, the history of ideas and the study of the sciences and the humanities.

It is this idea, which originated in the *Swedish Ernst Cassirer Society*, that we would like to explore and highlight in this work shop. In this regard, one could tentatively distinguish four different cases: (1) those who, like Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, freely admitted their indebtedness to Cassirer; (2) those who, like Michail Bakhtin, derived inspiration from his work without openly acknowledging this fact; and (3) those who, like Norbert Elias did not know him – more than by name, that is – or even misconstrued his position, but who nonetheless, by way of their dependence on related traditions of thought or their research into similar questions, unknowingly followed in his footsteps. (4) And, as a fourth and equally interesting possibility, those who actually knew his work in detail but, for specific reasons, nonetheless chose to distance themselves from it.

The purpose

If the overarching purpose of the work shop can be stated in historical terms, its underlying aim is more philosophical in nature. In directing attention to Cassirer's works and their varying reception, one might get a better vantage-point onto the cultural and intellectual developments of the 20th century in their entirety, beyond those traditional lines of demarcation – between the modern project and postmodernism, analytic and continental

philosophy, natural and cultural sciences, ‘the two cultures’, and so forth – that still tend to enmesh academic as well as wider public discussions in increasingly fruitless antinomies. Hence, by bringing together different scholars from different quarters of “the Cassirer Renaissance”, the goal is ultimately a more thorough understanding, not only of Cassirer’s historical conditions, but also of our own.

The Practicalities

The work shop will be organized at the *Centre Universitaire de Norvège à Paris* (<https://www.paris.uio.no/francaise/>) in collaboration with the *Center for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities* (<http://www.uib.no/en/svt>) at the University of Bergen, and in keeping with this rough plan:

Wednesday the 18th of April: Introduction and reception: Cassirer in the Nordic Countries (by Ingmar Meland)

Thursday the 19th of April: Who has been influenced by Cassirer and in what way?

Friday the 20th of April: Scholars and fields of influence

The abstracts (maximum 250 words) should be sent to: Ingmar.meland@gmail.com, and the deadline is set to the **1st of December 2017**. Feel free to send in the abstract before that date.

Please feel free also to **forward this call for abstracts/papers** to any colleagues who may be interested in contributing.

NB! Even if I am still working on the funding, this will be a low budget work shop, so participants will have to cover their own travel expenses and accommodation in Paris.

Yours sincerely,
Ingmar Meland