

# Inventions

Organised by: [Institut für Theorie](#) and [Vertiefung Theorie](#) at the Zürich University of the Arts, in cooperation with the [European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies](#) (eipcp) and Shedhalle Zürich

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*‘L’essentiel d’une inven-tion est de faire s’utiliser réciproquement des moyens d’action qui aupa-ra-vant paraissaient étrangers ou opposés; elle est une association de forces substituée à une opposition ou à une stérile juxtaposition de forces’.*

(Gabriel Tarde, L’opposition universelle).

The perhaps most influential theoretical current of the 20th century is no longer as young as it once was. Emerging within the social and political context of the 1960s and the 1970s, it was not a school of thought and its protagonists did not necessarily harbour the same theoretical concerns. More a period of intellectual intensity, it brought about deep-reaching transformations in life styles and forms of knowledge, leading to new discursive orders and new social practices. The term ‘post-structuralism’ is used as a conceptual designation that has always been comprehensive yet problematic, given that ‘post-structuralism’ refers to very different approaches. Today the main protagonists of these experiences of thought are no longer alive. Now it seems increasingly easy for the cooption, decontextualisation and depoliticisation of such theoretical endeavours to occur, when previously they were nourished at the subcultural margins. On different levels and in a variety of social contexts, ‘post-structuralism’ reappears watered down, isolated and reduced to mere slogans within an academic mainstream.

1. The fast-paced discursive realms of art are prone to assimilating the most innovative theorisations, whilst at the same time hollowing them out and getting rid of any resistance and contestation they entail. What used to be called ‘post-structuralism’ was intriguing precisely because of the marginal position it occupied in the field of knowledge. With its non-academic drives, poetic languages and experimental forms, it was exactly these writings that seemed to offer so much symbolic capital for the art field
2. In contrast, academic philosophy still remains deaf to the frequent calls of such new theoretical debates. Even fifty years on, academic philosophy prefers not to deal with theories that keep their distance from academic domestication and remain much too close to the ‘real’. Many of the most important approaches continue to be excluded from the philosophical canons, university careers and the dominant academic philosophical discourses.
3. It is perhaps due to the fact that academic philosophy ignored ‘post-structuralism’ that it was picked up in other disciplinary domains such as art and cultural studies. In art history, literary or film theory, a considerable number of small ‘post-structural’ islands have surfaced. However, it is precisely the applied and detailed studies that have been undertaken in these spheres that have all too often become exemplary of the more general problem of academic striation and decontextualisation. Inserting ‘post-structural’ approaches into the separate disciplines of art and cultural studies has often undermined their transversal potentialities, thus weakening the intensive and explosive character they possess.

4. Finally, 'post-structural' theories exist as a contested terrain in their exchanges with social movements and micro-political practices. Both after and along-side a 'generation' of counter-globalisation movements, bred through the 'post-structural' reading of Empire and Multitude, there seems to be a certain danger of a return to identitarian and even anti-intellectual positions, occurring both in research close to movements and within the movements themselves.

Of course the issues we are referring to here are in no way homogeneous; there are a lot of exceptions to their rules. However, the effects of ignorance, of appropriation, of 'academisation' are all components of a more general war against discursive insurgencies, through which the excesses of a dangerous 'theory-class' are meant to be disarmed.

In a series of events, Inventions will try to contribute to the recomposition of this 'dangerous class' by giving space to the quest of reinventing political philosophy. We aim to present contemporary positions of 'post-structuralism' whilst attempting to transversalise and queer its currents. A reinvention of the political and its theories may emerge from the same marginal fields that have nourished them for decades: (Queer-) feminist praxis, critical production of art and knowledge, critical migration studies, social movements and extra-academic philosophy.

If this is also about philosophy, then it is precisely not about creating yet another medium for the domestication, stratification and striation of social antagonisms and struggles, nor is this about forging another network in the arena of academic de- and revalorisation. 'Invention' is a form of cooperation intended to "establish connections among forces which once have been set against one another": such a connection of forces may produce new currents and temporary overlaps of discursive and social machines. The concatenation of an intellect becoming transversal and the sociality of political singularities implies a process of inventive recomposition.

Such recomposition produces new conceptualisations. Maybe the term 'post-structuralism' – never much more than an auxiliary construction to sum up very different theoretical currents – will become obsolete. Maybe it will be replaced by a new conceptual arrangement. Inventions aims to provide the necessary impulses that can make possible this new arrangement of concepts and its association with social machines.