

PHILOSOPHY AND KAFKA

Workshop at the ISSEI Conference »Thought in Science and Fiction«

Cankaya University (Ankara)

Date: August 2-6, 2010.

Place: Cankaya University, Ankara, Turkey.

Deadline: November 15, 2009.

Organized by the International Society for the Study of European Ideas.

Proposals of approximately 500 words or entire papers of no more than 3000 words (including notes) may be sent to Brendan Moran at bmoran@ucalgary.ca. Decisions concerning the final composition of the four hour session (of eight to ten papers) will be made within a month to six weeks following the submission deadline.

For information concerning the conference, see <http://issei2010.haifa.ac.il>.

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It is sometimes said that Franz Kafka's novels and stories defy philosophic extrapolation. Conversely, it has also been suggested that precisely the tendency of Kafka's writings to elude discursive solution is itself a philosophical tendency, one that is somehow contributing to a wiser relationship of human beings with language.

The workshop on *Philosophy and Kafka* will explore such questions about the relationship of Kafka's stories and novels with philosophy. A principal supplementary purpose will be to consider various conceptions of the relationship of literature and philosophy. Possible approaches include the following:

1. Focus on specific philosophical commentaries on Kafka, such as those by T.W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Günther Anders, or Hannah Arendt.
2. Consider the possible relevance or helpfulness of certain outlooks for examining Kafka's writings, outlooks such as those of Taoism, Spinoza, Kierkegaard, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Albert Camus, or existentialism.
3. Examine Kafka's writings through certain views of the relationship of literature or poetry with philosophy. Relevant views would include those for which poetry might involve a thinking that philosophy might not be able to achieve (Heidegger). Also of possible relevance in this context would be Kafka-commentaries by Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Hélène Cixous, and others.
4. Kafka's writings could be assessed from the perspective of a specific conception of the relationship of philosophy and art – outlooks such as those of Plato, Aristotle, Kant, the early German Romantics, Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Louis Althusser, Emmanuel Lévinas, Hans Blumenberg, Sarah Kofman, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Jürgen Habermas, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Jean-Luc Nancy, Alain Badiou, or Jacques Rancière.
5. Consider the relationship of Kafka's stories and novels with those aspects of his *Nachlass*, diaries, and letters that might more readily lend themselves to philosophical extrapolation.
6. Focus on »philosophical« affinities or divergences between Kafka's writings and writings by other authors (such as Heinrich von Kleist, Lewis Carroll, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, the surrealists, Robert Walser, Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Shmuel Agnon, Georges Bataille, Samuel Beckett, Julien Green, Paul Celan, Edmond Jabès, Ingeborg Bachmann, Maurice Blanchot, Wole Soyinka, Elfriede Jelinek, Orhan Pamuk).
7. Consider Kafka's writings in terms of a specific philosophical theme. Kafka's writings could be discussed in relation to ethics, aesthetics, love, sex, the sexes, political philosophy, legal theory, pragmatism, wisdom, thinking, myth, prophecy, the death penalty, or punishment.

These are only some of the possible approaches and topics. A principal criterion for selection will be the clear relevance of the proposal to some aspect of the topic »Philosophy and Kafka«.