Paul Dumouchel, "Images and their relatives" (Inter-doctoral Course)

University of Cagliari
Inter-doctoral Course

Visiting Professor/Scientist 2023/24 programme funded by Regional Law 7/2007 by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia

Paul Dumouchel

"Images and their relatives"

25 October – 13 November 2024

Inter-doctoral course at the University of Cagliari, co-organised by:

- *PhD programme in Civil Engineering and Architecture;*
- *PhD programme in Philosophy, Epistemology, and Human Sciences;*
- *PhD programme in Legal Sciences*

Paul Dumouchel is visiting professor at the University of Cagliari. He is Canadian, until recently professor at the Graduate School of Core Ethics and Frontier Sciences, Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan, where he thought political philosophy and philosophy of science. Now back in Canada he is affiliated with the Department of Philosophy of the University du Quebec at Montreal (UQAM) and visiting researcher at the Centre de Recherche en Droit Public (CRDP) of the University of Montreal.

Served as President of the Canadian Philosophical Association. Co-founder of the Centre de Recherche en Épistémologie Appliée (CREA) at the École Polythechnique in Paris.

Author of *Emotions* (1999), *The Ambivalence of Scarcity and Other Essays* (2014) and *The Barren Sacrifice* (2015), with Reiko Gotoh he edited *Against Injustice: The New Economics of Amartya Sen* (2009) and *Social Bonds as Freedom* (2015). His most recent book, with Luisa Damiano, is *Living with Robots* (2017)

Paul Dumouchel is visiting professor at the University of Cagliari within the Visiting Professor/Scientist 2023/24 programme funded by Regional Law 7/2007 by the Autonomous Region of Sardinia.

Paul Dumouchel è professore in visita all'Università di Cagliari nell'ambito del programma Visiting Professor/Scientist 2023/24, finanziato dalla LR 7/2007 della Regione Autonoma della Sardegna.

About the course

Series of eight lectures on "Images and their relatives".

The *relatives of images* are a cluster of concepts or ideas that are related to images and to each other through their meaning. They are related in such a way that we tend to explain any member of this cluster in relation to other members. For example, images, ideas, representation, copy, reproduction, imitation, simulation, icons, mirror or mirroring, mimesis, and model are all such that it is hard to explain one otherwise than by referring to other members of this group.

How do you explain what a representation is without taking about a copy or reproduction or an image? Similarly, the concepts of representation, of copy or of model, and of image are inseparable from of our notion of what is an idea.

It is clear that this set of concepts and notions are at the heart of human cognition and of how we understand it.

My first hypothesis is that image is the most fundamental member of this group and that more abstract concepts like idea, model, simulation, representation, but also relations between mental representation and of mental image are derived from the experience of images. Images are first in relation to ideas, representation, models, simulation, but their priority is not that of an idea but that of a particular type of objects.

My second thesis is that the priority of images is related to the difference between imitation and mimesis as both terms are understood by René Girard. Again, it is not essentially as two different ideas that imitation and mimesis differ, but as two different types of actions.

These two first theses imply that knowledge and action are not separated, more precisely that knowing is a form of action, rather than mere observation of the world.

In this series of conferences, my aim is first to defend and explicate these theses concerning knowledge and action exemplified by the priority of images and of mimesis. Second, I will argue that recognizing the priority of images as a particular type of objects and of mimesis over imitation in human knowledge has far reaching consequences.

They concern not only our conception of knowledge, the history of philosophy, but also our conception of knowledge. In particular as it is manifested today in the development and use of AI, where the concepts of model, simulation, and recognition (for example facial) occupy such an important place.

Calendar

25 October 2024, 17:00-19:00
Aula Nuova, 2° piano Palazzo Cugia, Via Santa Croce 67, Via Santa Croce 67

Lecture 1: "Images and their relatives"

In this first meeting my intention is to present the general problematic of this series of conferences on images and their relatives. I will describe what I see as the fundamental characteristics of images, and indicate their distance and proximity to related concepts, like imitation, representation, simulation, models, ideas and signs. Then I will present my central hypotheses concerning images and their role in human cognition and indicate, or rather anticipate, on some of the consequences they have for our conception and practice of knowledge.

28 October 2024, 17:00-19:00
Aula Nuova, 2° piano Palazzo Cugia, Via Santa Croce 67

Lecture 2: "Mimesis and imitation"

Here I will present some fundamental aspects of René Girard mimetic theory. First I will give an overview of the theory insisting on some consequences of this way of looking at the world, among other thing the importance if gives to violence, that are consequential for the way I want to analyse images. In particular, I will stress the difference between imitation and mimesis. At this point I will not talk so much about images but about what I think underlies the ability to make images.

Discussant Ivan Blečić (Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering and Architecture)

29 October 2024, 17:00-19:00
Aula Motzo, Corpo Centrale, Polo Sa Duchessa

Lecture 3: "The power of images"

First, I will review and expand on some of things I said about images in the first meeting. After I will expand the thesis that illustrate the power of images. Humans respond to images in very forceful ways. The two examples of the power or images, I will present illustrate two different relations between images and violence. First, how we do violence with images: revenge porn and second, how we do violence to images: iconoclasm.

Discussant Francesca Ervas (Department of Pedagogy, Psychology and Philosophy)

4 November 2024, 17:00-19:00
Aula Motzo, Corpo Centrale, Polo Sa Duchessa

Lecture 4: "Robots and images"

Most social robots are made in an image Sometimes extremely so, for example robots like Gemenoid or Sophia that are doubles of real person in the first case. Sometimes, they only vaguely resemble us, but for various robots we will look at most social robots have a humanoid shape and aim to imitate various aspects of human behaviour. Are such robots images? The answer, I will suggest has something to do with the notion of presence which is fundamental in both robotics and the analysis of images.

Discussant Pietro Salis (Department of Pedagogy, Psychology and Philosophy)

5 November 2024, 17:00-19:00
Facoltà di Scienze economiche, giuridiche e politiche
Aula Teatro, FO-A
piano terra Edificio F del Campus Sant'Ignazio, Via Nicolodi 106

Lecture 5: "Icons, Indexes and Symbols"

The American philosopher Charles Sandor Peirce distinguishes between three different types of signs: icons, indexes, and symbols. Icons are images, but symbols are not. It is not entirely clear where indexes stand in relation to images. The anthropologist Alfred Gell proposes an anthropology of theory of art that analyses all works of arts as indexes. Most of the art works he has in mind is not representative and I will argue that indexes are the paradigm of non-representative images.

Discussants Gianmario Demuro, Olimpia Loddo and Giuseppe Lorini (Department of Law)

6 November 2024, 17:00-19:00
Aula 1B, 3° piano Corpo Centrale, Polo Sa Duchessa

Lecture 6: "Copies and Models: Reproduction and originals"

Here we will turn in part towards biology where copying and reproduction play such an important role, but also to the idea of modelization in science. In biology one of the main issue is the fidelity of the copying process, because in mitosis and conversely copying mistake. And the result of this copying process is not an image but another one of the same, another protein, another cell, another complex organism. Evolutionary biology, or rather evolution can be seen as a series of copying mistake. – distinguish between biological reproduction and industrial reproduction.

In science modelizing is guided by a completely different set of criteria. A model by definition disregards many important aspects of whatever it aims at modelling. The gain in knowledge a model can provide is closely related to the fact that the model is an imperfect representation. (To take an excessively evident example, we modelize thermo-nuclear reactions because such models *are not* thermo-nuclear reactions.) The importance of the difference between the model and what it is a model of remains true even in the sciences of artificial that use the synthetic method: learning by doing.

Discussant Ivan Blečić (Department of Civil & Environmental Engineering and Architecture)

11 November 2024, 17:00-19:00
Aula Nuova, 2° piano Palazzo Cugia, Via Santa Croce 67

Lecture 7: "Ideas, images, representations and intentional objects"

It is probably no accident that in so many languages to see also means to understand and, in English at least, to understand is also said "to figure" In fact, the Greek word *eidos* from which is derived our word "idea" also means form, figure and image. So, I wish to enquire into the relationship between vision and understanding, between seeing and grasping (another, but different, interesting image!), between figure and figuring. I also wish to address the relationship between images, which are concrete particulars, and abstract concept, classes. Representation is a central concept in cognitive sciences that is inseparable from the idea of an intentional object, which is more or less viewed as a mental image which the subject uses to act in the world. According to this point of view, we do not interact with the world but with a mental image of the world. An image however, is not an intentional object, but an object in the world that represents by being both like and different from the object it represents. Images, I will argue are the model of intentional objects. It is images that provided us with that idea.

13 November 2024, 17:00-19:00
Aula ex DIGITA, Edificio D, Campus Facoltà di Ingegneria e Architettura, Via Marengo 2

Lecture 8: "Do we live in a simulation?"

There is a suggestion that has been advanced by some philosophers, but also by others, i.e. Elon Musk, or the film *Matrix* that we live in a simulation. This idea has a long and sophisticated ancestry in philosophy which I will review rapidly. I will argue that this hypothesis is inseparable from reducing representation to a dyadic relation and confusing representations with images.

Enrolment

The Course is open for enrolment to PhD, graduate and undergraduate students of the University of Cagliari.

To enrol please fill in the enrolment form.

For learning credits (CFU) recognition, the nominal duration of the series is 18 hours (8 conferences, 2 hours each).

It is possible to attend individual lectures. In that case also, students are requested to enrol to receive materials and updates on the lectures.

For further information contact Ivan Blečić (ivanblecic@unica.it)

Organising Committee

- Ivan Blečić, PhD programme in Civil Engineering and Architecture
- Gianmario Demuro, PhD Programme in Legal Sciences
- Francesca Ervas, PhD programme in Philosophy, Epistemology, and Human Sciences
- Giuseppe Lorini, Department of Law
- Emanuel Muroni, Department of Civile & Environmental Engineering and Architecture
- Giuseppe Sergioli, PhD programme in Philosophy, Epistemology, and Human Sciences