Irony, either as a paradigmatic strategy of inquiry and critique or as a trait of character and existential perspective, has deeply informed Western culture and its philosophical and political tradition. The contemporary presence of irony in arts and everyday life – in the use of quotation, appropriation, pastiche, parody, kitsch, etc. – while questioning authenticity and authority, often conceals a lack of commitment that might be seen as a revival of the Jena romantics’ epistemological view, in some cases taken to a solipsistic extreme. On one hand, irony as a strategy can be subversive, by deconstructing dogmas and canons, as, for instance, in the challenging of the Kantian notion of beauty by the Duchampian ready-made. On the other hand, it can be conformist when it is expressed as an end in itself, devoid of demystifying quality. Refusing to be dialogical or dialectical, it leaves no room for significant aesthetical experience and/or desirable ethical and political reactions to the established thinking.

Irony’s potential today is thus an ambivalent one. If transformative power in politics and aesthetics ultimately lies in undermining norms and claims about truth (Rorty, 1989), postmodern perpetual ironical questioning might lead to the dead-end of nihilism or cynicism (Sloterdijk, 1988 [1983]). What is more, postmodernity might even reveal its very impossibility, since the ironical suspicion about the death of meta-narratives cannot altogether avoid a transcendental point of view (Deleuze, 1990 [1969]). Therefore, in this context, the contemporary problem of irony may perhaps be addressed as the problem of postmodernity itself.

In order to reflect upon the ways irony frames (post)modernity, we must rehearse answers to questions such as: how is irony used as a trope in today’s artistic, cultural and political discourses, and practices? How do these rhetorical devices relate to postmodernity as an ironic epoch? How does irony make way for critique? Or, instead, how does irony neutralize the power of criticism by becoming self-referential?

This conference wishes to bring together doctoral students and post-docs working within disciplines that relate to the study of culture (arts, humanities and social sciences), and that seek a forum for prolific debate.

Contributions are welcome on the topics listed below, amongst others:

- Irony, politics and communication
- Irony vs. humour, absurd
- Irony vs. silence, death
- Irony and satire
- Irony, popular culture and subcultures (e.g. camp, retro, hipster)
- Irony, post-history and nostalgia
- The ironic potential of re-enactment
- Irony as a strategy in artistic practice
- Irony and the “interesting” (interessant)
• Irony, subjectivity and deconstruction
• Irony, cynicism and ideology
• Irony, criticism and resistance
• Irony of fate and the discourse of crisis
• Irony, desacralization and secularization
• Irony and language-games
• Post-ironic ethics

References:


**Keynote speakers:**

• Jorge Fazenda Lourenço (Catholic University of Portugal)
• Mario Perniola (University of Rome “Tor Vergata”)
• Michele Cometa (University of Palermo)
• Philip Auslander (Georgia Institute of Technology)
• Rui Catalão (Performer and writer)

Speakers should be prepared for a 20-minute presentation in English followed by discussion. Please send a 300-word abstract, as well as a brief biographical note (100 words) to irony2014@gmail.com by **October 15th, 2013**. Proposals should list paper title, name, institutional affiliation and contact details. Successful applicants will be notified by **October 31st, 2013**. Please note there is a conference registration fee of 50€ due by **November 15th, 2013**. We regret that travel and accommodation funding for conference participants is not available at this time.

**For further information:** http://irony2014conference.wordpress.com

**Organizing Committee:**

• Ana Dinger
• Elsa Alves