

INCONTRI AL DOTTORATO (Università di Udine e Università di Trieste)
Dottorato interateneo in Studi linguistici e letterari

Prof. Dr. Rolf-Peter Janz (FU Berlin)

TRIESTE, 20 aprile 2017
h.11.00
Sala lezioni dottorato alla SSLMIT
via Filzi 14

Laughter – promoted and forbidden.
With particular reference to Nietzsche, Heine and Kafka

Laughter comes in many forms. There's mad or diabolical laughter, black humour, laughing till we cry, shaking with laughter, and so on. Kant described it as "the affect that agitates the intestines and the diaphragm". A non-verbal expression of the body, laughter is a topic that has challenged philosophers from Aristotle to Nietzsche, Helmuth Plessner to Hans Blumenberg. Among other things these writers ask, how and why do we laugh, at what and about whom do we laugh, etc. Why, to quote an example from Jean Paul, are we inclined to laugh when we read that somebody, instead of falling on his knees, falls on his kneecap. We laugh because we become aware of a difference, the difference between a solemn act of devotion and banal anatomy. Other questions that Prof. Janz will address in his lecture include:

What is the social function of laughter ? Is it subversive or harmless? "The usual artillery of Ridicule is Wit", Corbin Morris suggested.

Why and when is laughter forbidden, and by whom? Umberto Eco's "The Name of the Rose" offers an answer.

Drawing on Nietzsche, Blumenberg and others, the lecture will examine whether some of the theoretical notions they developed can help us to analyze scenarios of laughter in Heine's "The Rabbi of Bacherach" and in Kafka's "A Report to an Academy".