

In Lawrence D. Kritzman, ed. Columbia History of Twentieth-Century French Thought. New York: Columbia UP, 2005.

Collège International de Philosophie

The Collège International de Philosophie (CIPh) was conceived in 1982 by François Châtelet, JACQUES DERRIDA, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt as a place where the work of philosophy could be pursued as well as contested at its crossroads with other disciplines. Reforms in education in France following May 1968, and the experimental universities of the 1970s, had been largely ineffectual in freeing the study of philosophy from the sclerosis of conservative, history-based habits. With the financial support of an early Mitterrand government, the founders of the Collège and its first president, JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD, along with the first program directors, enabled the interdisciplinary discussion of philosophy to blossom in the seminar rooms and lecture halls of the former École Polytechnique in rue Descartes, just down the street from the Panthéon. Today, however, after more than twenty years of vibrant research and public discussion, the Collège has seen much of its government subsidy diminish and appears to some to have lost some of its radically innovative thrust.

The rationale for the Collège, its early history, and several fascinating texts written by its founders about the organization are contained in the yet-to-be-translated *Rapport bleu* (1998). Despite the unusually acute and enduring impact of such poststructuralist French thinkers as MICHEL FOUCAULT and GILLES DELEUZE, who saw boundaries between disciplines as porous, philosophy continued to be taught and thought of as a metadiscipline, an island unto its own. Derrida, Châtelet, and their friends decided to

establish a place where the many people who disagreed with this vision could work and teach. The founders and their followers believed, against the doxa, that philosophy thrives in nonhierarchical, osmotic exchange with aesthetics, literature, psychoanalysis, and other disciplines. As the CIPh evolved, it tolerated and even welcomed interchange between philosophers working in the analytic tradition and what the Anglo-Saxon world dubs “Continental” philosophy—the tradition with which the CIPh is nevertheless identified, by virtue of the valence and objects of study of the vast majority of its instructors and researchers, called “program directors.”

The Collège is constituted of fifty program directors, each elected for six years on the basis of a stringent examination of the merits of their past work and their intended program. Half of this faculty is replaced every three years. Of the fifty directors, forty are based in France, and ten teach and do their research primarily abroad. Seminars of anywhere from two to twenty or more sessions run nearly all year round at the Collège’s Latin Quarter locale; some are offered in other locations, even in other countries. Like the Collège de France, the CIPh attracts graduate students from various faculties around Paris, members of the general public, and, occasionally, other program directors. Although the seminars given outside France or in the French provinces are announced on a par with those given in Paris, it is the Paris events that are best attended. In that sense, although the Collège is technically still international because 20 percent of its directors are foreign, it has struggled to live up to the promise contained in the adjective *international*.

Among the best-known of past program directors at the Collège are Jean-François Lyotard, ALAIN BADIOU, Michel Deguy, PHILIPPE LACOUE-LABARTHE, Christine Buci-Glucksmann, JEAN-LUC NANCY, JACQUES RANCIÈRE, Gianni Vattimo, Barbara Cassin, Giorgio Agamben, PAUL VIRILIO, Abdelkebir Khatibi, and Sam Weber.

The Collège has published book series, first with the Presses Universitaires de France and currently with Éditions Kimé. Its journal, with its well-known logo drawn by Valerio Adami, is *Rue Descartes*.

French universities and other places of higher learning—such as the École Normale Supérieure—have still not seen fit to free the study of philosophy from its long-outdated straitjacket. Nevertheless, many pundits—including the sympathetic—wonder about the continuing relevance of a Collège International de Philosophie as an intellectual refuge in a world of philosophical exchange now far more open and imaginative than it was in the early 1980s. Further, in an era when French government subsidies for cultural endeavors are shrinking, no matter whether the Right

or the Left is in power, the fate of associations that hold stubbornly to the vision of the providential state rather than seek private funding is the balance. *Robert Harvey*

FURTHER READING

Châtelet, François, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Pierre Faye, and Dominique Lecourt. *Le rapport bleu: Les sources historiques et théoriques du Collège International de Philosophie*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998.