

ABOUT LABONT

The Laboratory for Ontology (LabOnt, <http://www.labont.it/>) is a research centre of the Department of Philosophy, University of Turin. The members of LabOnt are PhD students and young Researchers in philosophy, with different specializations, ranging from theoretical philosophy, philosophy of language, aesthetics, philosophy of the cognitive sciences, and history of philosophy. Maurizio Ferraris founded the Laboratory in 1999, he organizes the activities of the Laboratory and the training of young researchers, and works directly to improve and develop the research line devoted to social ontology. Under his tutorship, many young researchers have developed their specific skills in cooperation and been able to achieve many important results – both in terms of publication, services to the professions and teaching.

The general research field of LabOnt is ontology, namely the philosophical discipline that aims at providing a theory of what exists. Ontology, along with metaphysics at large, has lately returned to playing a central role in philosophy. This is probably because ontology has been attentive towards the empirical results of the "hard-sciences", while not being servile towards them. On the contrary, a distinctive trait of contemporary researches in ontology is their explicit and critical approach to the study of the nature of the objects that constitute reality. The latter is understood as an objective background that constrains the lives of human beings, but also yields opportunities to them (such as society, economy, politics, art). Within this domain of problems and research questions, one of the main targets is the philosophical elaboration of theories that can enlarge and enrich, when necessary, the description of reality given by the natural sciences - physics, biology, but also cognitive psychology.

The activities of LabOnt are connected to this general research trend. In particular, the most recent works of the researchers has focused on the ontology of social objects and the relationships between the ontology of the social and other branches of ontology. The research activities have culminated in a series of **international and national conferences**, among which:

- Filosofia Web, 8 March - 26 April, 2010, Circolo dei Lettori, Torino
- Monumentum.doc – Labont Workshop, anno XI, University of Torino, 11-12 January 2010
- Filosofia POP, 29 September - 15 December 2009, Circolo dei Lettori, Torino
- “È naturale essere naturalisti?” Conference on naturalism, 4 May 2009, University of Torino
- Brillo | Artist's Thought - International Festival of Philosophy of Contemporary Art, Turin, 31 October - 1 November 2008 (in collaboration with Fondazione Merz, Torino)
- Workshop with Matthew Barney, 29 October 2008, Accademia Albertina, Torino
- Arthur C. Danto *Lectio Magistralis*, (Honorary Degree awarded to Arthur C. Danto by The University of Torino), 28 October 2008, University of Torino
- The future of Aesthetics. In honour of Arthur Danto, Turin 2-4 October 2007;
- Third National Conference of Analytical Ontology, 15-16 November Torino, 2007;
- Documentality. The Ontology of Social Objects, Turin, 25-26 January 2007 (in collaboration with Fondazione Rosselli, Turin);
- Second National Conference of Analytical Ontology, 7 July Torino, 2007

- Social Ontologies, 20 June 2005, University of Torino
- The Paradox of non-existence (Kroon Lectures), 23 May 2005, University of Torino
- On What (perhaps) There is, 20 May 2005, University of Bergamo
- FOIS 2004, Third International Conference on Formal Ontology in Information Systems, Turin 3-6 November.

As for the dissemination of the results, LabOnt resorts to two important **means of publication**: the "Rivista di Estetica" (<http://www.labont.it/ESTETICA/index.asp>), one of the most prestigious journals of philosophy in Italy, which has been in existence for more than fifty years, and the book series "Collana del Laboratorio di Ontologia" (<http://www.labont.it/collonto.asp>). Through such instruments, LabOnt can guarantee an efficient dissemination of the overall and partial results of the work of the group.

Among the results, (a complete description can be found at <http://www.labont.it/People.asp>), we should mention the publication of a handbook of history of ontology (Storia dell'Ontologia, Milan, Bompiani 2008), which contains contributions from almost all the members of the unit, along with those of international experts; and which has been adopted for teaching at undergraduate level. In recent years, the research skills of LabOnt have consolidated through the actualization of **four Italian Research Ministry Programmes (PRIN)**:

- "Intellectual Property: Properties of Objects, Properties of Ideas" (2002-2004);
- "Ontological Canon. An Integrative Approach to Knowledge Organization" (2004-2006);
- "Documentality. Ontologies and Technologies for Citizenship and Democracy" (2006-2008).
- "Doc: Documentality Organizin Social Complexity" (2008-2010)

A further distinguishing trait of the laboratory lies in the ability to interface its research activities with those of other (both national and international) institutions. Among the most important ones, we should mention:

- University and Research Centres:
 - Department of Philosophy, Columbia University, New York
 - Italian Academy, New York
 - Institut Jean Nicod, Paris
 - Alexander-von Humbolt-Stiftung, Bonn
 - Center for Ethics, Law and Applied Philosophy, Belgrade
 - Inter-departmental Center Colli-Montinari of the University, Pisa
 - German-Italian Cultural Center "Villa Vigoni"
 - The Italian Institute for Philosophical Studies, Naples
 - The European Centre for Ontological Research

- j. Institute for Formal Ontology and Medical Information Science (IFOMIS), Universität des Saarlandes, Germany
- k. National Centre for Biomedical Ontology
- l. Learning Center Vodafone, Milano
- m. IBM Center for Advanced Studies, Roma
- n. Internet Media Group, Polytechnic of Torino

(ii) Philosophical Societies:

- a. Italian Society of Analytic Philosophy, SIFA
- b. Italian Society of Aesthetics, SIE
- c. Italian Society for Theoretical Philosophy, SIFIT

(iii) Foundations:

- a. Fondazione Mario Merz, Torino
- b. Fondazione Rosselli, Torino
- c. Circolo dei Lettori, Torino
- d. Fondazione Telecom Italia, Roma

In light of what has been claimed, DOC will be for the research team an important opportunity to systematize and enhance many researches that have led the LabOnt to be part of a network of excellence in the field.