

Futures of Political Theology

Nomos / Demos / Pseudos



An International Symposium 2 June 2017 – Room PRJG0003

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Symposium Description

Upon the occasion of some strange or deformed birth, it shall not be decided by Aristotle, or the philosophers, whether the same be a man or no, but by the laws.

–Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

–W.B. Yeats, *'The Second Coming'*

What – strange, deformed, beastly – species of political order is struggling to be born today? To be sure, political praxis and theory has sought to narrate the history of the contemporary from the financial crash of 2008 to the election of Donald Trump in 2016 in many different and competing ways. In the early 21st century, we are said to be witnessing everything from the death of liberalism, globalization and internationalism to the birth of a new extreme populism, protectionism and isolationism – all presided over by a new kind of Demogorgon (people-monster).

Yet, what arguably makes our current crisis so difficult to name is that it is not merely a political crisis but a crisis of the political – of the particular triangulation between truth, authority and representation that has dominated politics since the early modern period. If we are experiencing a new set of constitutional crises in Europe, America and elsewhere – between executive, legislature and judiciary, between national and transnational sovereignty and more widely between representative and direct democracy – it is perhaps because they reflect a larger and more profound political dissensus about who or what – if anyone – has the authority to decide upon truth. In this sense, contemporary media controversies – ‘truthiness’, ‘fake news’, ‘alternative facts’ – are merely a symptom of a much deeper political ontological pathology where *nomos*, *demos* and *pseudos* meet and clash.

This international symposium gathers together a group of distinguished interdisciplinary scholars – including philosophers, political theorists, theologians and cultural critics – to explore not simply the future of political theology but the political theology of the future. What can the conceptual resources of political theology – the messianic, the apocalyptic, the eschatological and so on – contribute to a re-thinking of the future? How might political theology intervene in, and re-imagine, our contemporary crises of truth, authority, representation, economy, populism and so on? What might a political theology of the 21st century look like?