

History and Authority: Political Vocabularies of the Modern Age

Humanities Research Centre
Australian National University
27-29 July 2016
Convenors: Knox Peden & Glenn Roe

All talks will take place in the main lecture hall of the China in the World Building (#188).

Wednesday 27 July

6:00-7:30pm *Welcome Reception (University House), sponsored by the French Research Cluster*

Thursday 28 July

8:45am – *Opening Remarks by Professor Paul Pickering (CASS Dean)*

9:00-10:30am *Panel 1 (Ancient, Medieval, and Modern) Chair: Greta Hawes*

Andrew Gillett (Macquarie): Decline, Fall, Repeat: The Fall of Rome, the Collapse of the West, and the Retreat of European Multiculturalism

Louise D'Arcens (Macquarie): The 'Melancholic' Middle Ages in Recent French Political Commentary

Clare Monagle (Macquarie): Protagonist not slave: Papal Encyclicals and Globalisation

10:30-10:45am *Tea*

10:45-12:15pm *Panel 2 (Revolutions) Chair: Gemma Betros*

Alex Cook (ANU): History as Ideology or History as 'Idéologie': C.F. Volney and the Uses of the Past in Revolutionary France

Nicole Coleman (Stanford): Writing Rights

Nico Bell-Romero (Sydney): Remembering the Rebellion: British Intellectuals and American Revolutionary Memory, 1783-1795

12:15-1:15pm *Lunch*

1:15-3:15pm *Panel 3 (German Idealism and Its Legacy) Chair: Desmond Manderson*

Jennifer Mensch (Western Sydney): Kant and the German Enlightenment: From Universal History to the Vocation of Man

Michael Olson (Macquarie): Enlightenment, Dog Whistle Politics, and the Relation of History and Philosophy

Simon Lumsden (UNSW): Hegel, History, and the End of Self-Determination

Ben Gook (Melbourne): Alienation in Disaffected Times: The Return of an Irreplaceable Concept?

3:15-3:30pm *Tea*

3:30-5:00pm Panel 4 (*Figures of Equality*) Chair: Fiona Jenkins

Ben Huf (ANU): Making Political Subjects Economic Agents: Vocabularies of Classical Political Economy in Colonial Australia

Jessica Whyte (Western Sydney): The 'Anti-Chrematistic Spirit': Popular Demands for Equality in Ludwig von Mises' China and Daniel Defoe's England

Jean-Philippe Deranty (Macquarie): The Great Leveller: Political and Figural Ambiguities of Equality

5:15-6:30pm Keynote Lecture

Peter Hallward (Kingston): Representation or Concentration: Jacobin Conceptions of Popular Sovereignty

7:30pm Conference Dinner (Temporada, 15 Moore St., Canberra ACT 2601)

Friday 29 July

9:00-10:15am Keynote Lecture

Alison Ross (Monash): What is Walter Benjamin's Idea of Revolution?

10:15-10:45am Tea

10:45-12:15pm Panel 5 (*Visual Vocabularies*) Chair: Robert Wellington

Roger Benjamin (Sydney): Public Space, Symbolic Domination: Statues of Cardinal Lavigerie from the Colonial Maghreb (1896-2016)

Clare Veal (Sydney): Karmic Action and Dharmic Legitimacy: Indexicality and Iconicity in Thai Royal Photography

Chris McAuliffe (ANU): Australia's Corrosive Littoral: Manifestations of Fear in the Age of Fugitive Power

12:15-1:15pm Lunch

1:15-2:45pm Panel 6 (*Sovereignty and the State*) Chair: Gemma King

Roger Markwick (Newcastle): The 'Sacralisation' of History and State Legitimation

Ben Mercer (ANU): Nanterre 1969: The Search for Authority

Robert Boncardo (Sydney/Aix-Marseille) & Bryan Cooke (Melbourne): The International Proletariat of France: Alain Badiou and the SONACOTRA rent strike movement, 1975-1979

2:45-3:00pm Tea

3:00-4:30pm Panel (*Disciplines and Discipline*) Chair: Leslie Barnes

Mark Kelly (Western Sydney): On the Genealogy of Normativity

Thomas Lalevée (ANU): Physiology, Social Science and the Origins of French Socialism, 1789-1848

Justin Clemens (Melbourne): No More Other: Technology and Republicanism

4:30-4:45pm Tea

4:45-5:30pm Closing Discussion

5:30-6:30pm Drinks at The Wig & Pen

Keynote Abstracts:

Peter Hallward (Kingston): Representation or Concentration: Jacobin Conceptions of Popular Sovereignty

One of the defining tensions of French Revolutionary political practice divides the advocates of orderly forms of representative government on the one hand from the partisans of direct popular empowerment on the other. Relatively moderate revolutionaries like Sieyès and Condorcet (and after them revisionist analysts like Keith Baker, Lucien Jaume or Pierre Rosanvallon) seek to establish a form of proto-liberal democracy via suitably constituted means of representing the distinct interests that make up a complex, modern commercial society, while preserving the inequalities of wealth and influence that result from the 'free' pursuit of these interests. By the same token, critics of Robespierre and Marat regularly point to their apparent failure to address the question of representation as the central impasse of their conception of sovereignty. Against such criticisms, this talk will offer a qualified defence of the more egalitarian Jacobin conception of democracy, grounded in assertions of natural right and collective legislative power. What is decisive, from this perspective, is the invention of means of concentrating popular determination and mass pressure, in both time and space, in ways that might allow for the realisation of 'the will of the people.'

Alison Ross (Monash): What is Walter Benjamin's Idea of Revolution?

I would like in this paper to outline Walter Benjamin's highly idiosyncratic conception of 'revolution'. Like many topics covered in his heterogeneous corpus, the concept of revolution receives inconsistent treatment, and neither does it fit with the conventional definition of the term in other fields, thus ruling out the benefits that might usually be expected from comparative analysis. In contrast to the way the term is usually specified in political philosophy, Benjamin understands by revolution a type of emphatic experience of meaning. The paper defends this interpretation in three main steps: first, I argue that Benjamin's idea of revolution refers specifically to revolutionary experience; second, I contend that the distinguishing characteristic of this experience is expressed in the value he ascribes to transparent perception; finally, I claim that the main problem in Benjamin's conception, and one he is unable to resolve, is coming up with an adequate notion of collective revolutionary experience.