

Seminaria gościnne Profesora Haralda Wydry *Cultural Sources of Politics*

Laboratorium Humanistyki Współczesnej w Instytucie Kulturoznawstwa UWr zaprasza studentów i doktorantów do udziału w seminariach prowadzonych przez Profesora Haralda Wydrę (Uniwersytet w Cambridge). Cykl seminariów pod tytułem ***The rituals, symbols and sacred in the contemporary politics*** odbędzie się w dniach od **5 do 9 grudnia 2016**.

Profesor Harald Wydra jest politologiem pracującym na Uniwersytecie w Cambridge. Jego zainteresowania badawcze obejmują antropologię polityczną, religioznawstwo oraz studia nad pamięcią. W swej ostatniej książce *Politics and the Sacred* (Cambridge 2015) zajmuje się tym, jak relacje między *sacrum* a politycznością konstytuują naszą współczesność.

Harmonogram seminariów:

- poniedziałek, 5.12.2016, godz. 15.00-17.15: *Generacje pamięci*
- wtorek, 6.12.2016, godz. 12.00-14.15: *Rewolucje i polityka ofiary*
- środa, 7.12.2016, godz. 12.00-14.15: *Racjonalizacje świętości*
- czwartek, 8.12.2016, godz. 12.00-14.15: *Egzystencjalne i polityczne: refleksje na temat wschodnioeuropejskiej opozycji*
- piątek, 9.12.2016, godz. 12.00-14.15: *Rekapitulacja*

Profesor Wydra wygłosi także wykład otwarty pt. *The cultural sources of politics: reflections on violence in a world without limits*, który odbędzie się we środę 7.12.2016 o godzinie 18 (ul. Szewska 36, sala 208).

Seminaria w wymiarze 15 godzin będą prowadzone w języku angielskim. Uczestnicy otrzymają zaświadczenie o udziale (na podstawie którego mogą ubiegać się o usprawiedliwienie nieobecności na innych zajęciach) oraz 3 punkty ECTS. Studenci kulturoznawstwa mogą w ten sposób zaliczyć jeden semestr zajęć opcyjnych. Warunkiem zaliczenia seminarium jest aktywne uczestnictwo i/lub napisanie krótkiego eseju.

Osoby zainteresowane udziałem w seminarium prosimy o przesyłanie zgłoszeń na adres: laboratorium@uni.wroc.pl (zgłoszenie powinno zawierać: imię i nazwisko, rok i kierunek studiów oraz krótkie uzasadnienie chęci udziału). Po przyjęciu zgłoszenia uczestnicy otrzymają teksty do lektury. Na zgłoszenia czekamy do 30 listopada 2016 roku.

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Poniżej przedstawiamy abstrakty artykułów Profesora Wydry, których tematyka będzie podstawą seminariów.

Generations of Memory

This paper argues that memory is contingent on generations of meaning because generational belonging mediates access to memory. Generations of meaning are

understood as a hermeneutic process, whereby generational divisions constitute thresholds of experience. In spite of conflict and struggle, generations of meaning create memories because they connect - beyond the lifetime of individuals - with the wider cultural existence of social communities. This paper examines four different dimensions of generations of memory. First, generativity produces new carriers of culture and memory, which enables time-bound horizons of historical beginnings. Second, generations are confronted with limit situations and in-betweenness, which they aim to transcend by mediation, binding, and appropriation of pasts. Third, generations work like hinges as they connect perceptions of the past and swing open the door to the future. Fourth, generations of meaning should be conceived of as a cumulative process across spatial and temporal distance. From a generational perspective memory requires thinking of agency as stretched out in the background from which new meanings are mobilised.

Revolutions and Sacrificial Politics

This paper argues that revolutions bind the spirit of citizenship through the cultural memory of victimhood. Whilst modern political order rests on the authority to distinguish 'good' from 'bad' violence by concealing the original sacrifice and preventing further sacrifice, the sacrificial logic of revolutionary violence frequently leads to cycles of victimhood. Revolutions are therefore paradoxical: they generate order by overcoming the past but also institute memory frames that perpetuate cycles of sacrifice against enemies who become acceptable and necessary victims of the new regime. Whilst the French Revolution externalised violence, the Bolshevik revolution and the fascist regime internalized violence. Taking the position that the anthropological constant in humans is not violence but mimetic behavior this paper argues that the outcome of revolutionary processes are contingent on existent cultural meanings and historical paths. Drawing on the non-sacrificial strategies of self-defence in the self-limiting Solidarity Revolution Poland, this paper suggests that the ontological capacities of human beings can also overcome the pursuit of sacrificial logic and achieve reconciliation.

Rationalities of the Sacred

Although a secular political world considers non-negotiable and sacred truths to be irrational, this paper argues for taking rationalities of the sacred as key to understanding political processes. Rather than to understand the sacred as based on metaphysical beliefs or transcendence, the focus here is to link rationalities of the sacred to limit situations and the brokenness of political reality. This paper proposes three modes of enquiry, which extrapolate rationalities of the sacred from limit situations. First, despite the irrationality of foundations after the 'death of God', extraordinary politics at the limits can make the pursuit of 'ultimate ends' appear as end-rational. Second, despite the demise of 'sacrifice' as an institution and a legitimate form of social power, limit situations produce sacrificial practices as exemplified in torture as a legitimate means in the war on terror, or neo-liberal forms of sacrificial citizenship. Third, politics 'at the limits' refers to the decline of the state's moral capacity to distinguish good from bad violence. The end of territory, as exemplified in the 'war on terror', produces borderline situations 'at the limits', which cannot be decided by sacrificial logics or ultimate ends. Ultimately, rationalities of the sacred provide moderation and reflective distance in the face of the irrationality of absurdity and meaninglessness.

The Existential and the Political: Reflections on Eastern European Dissidence

Forms of dissidence in Eastern Europe drew on practices of life-conduct and performances of non-violent and 'self-limiting' revolution. Drawing on the cases of Czechoslovak dissidence and the Polish Solidarity movement, this paper argues that the existential approach of dissidence was profoundly political. In a first step, it reformulates

conventional understandings of the political from the anthropological insight that the dissolution of order and the distortion of meaningful social relations open up the quest for new markers of certainty. Using Gandhi's concept of the political, a second step suggests that politics should not be confined to the use of violent means but should consider the means as ends in the making. The quest for ultimate ends has been historically fundamental in engaging temporal and spiritual forms of power. In a third step, the practices and resonance of dissidence are examined with regard to how to overcome internalised forms of dissimulation, self-censorship, and ritualistic obedience to increasingly meaningless acts. The focus here is on experiences of conversion, which start at the individual level. Such processes, however, are not generated in rational deliberation or autonomy but they are socially learnt in *communitas* experiences of revolution, humiliation, and defeat. Transforming mimetic contagion into a quest for ultimate ends that renounces on the means of violence, dissidence relied on the person's capacity for self-transcendence and the quest for meaning. Finally, I argue that practices of dissidence in Eastern Europe transcend the Weberian distinction between ethics of responsibility and ethics of ultimate ends. Dissidence performed acts that required reflection, introspection and conviction. However, these acts carried considerable inner weight and maturity, as they were socially learnt, stored in cultural memories, and propagated by minorities in the hidden sphere.



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