

Political bodies

Centre for Thought of John Paul II (Warsaw)
Instituto de Filosofía "Edith Stein" - International Academy of Philosophy (Granada)
International Center for the Study of the Christian Orient (Granada)

Course offered in the framework of the
International Summer School (1-7. 09. 2014):

Beyond secular faith

The Body

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It is recorded of Cain that he built a city, but Abel, being a sojourner, built none.

St. Augustine, City of God

This marvelous world [...] *is the theater of a never-ending battle being waged for our dignity and identity as free, spiritual beings*. This struggle parallels the apocalyptic combat [...]. Death battles against Life: *a "culture of death" seeks to impose itself on our desire to live, and live to the full*. [...] In every age, a measure of their apparent success is the *death of the Innocents*.

John Paul II, 8th World Youth Day, 15 August 1993

I. DESCRIPTION

For Aristotle, polis, political society, was the highest good. It was the participation in polis that rendered man truly human. "He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature, and yet he who first founded the state was the greatest of benefactors. For man, when perfected, is the best of animals, but, when separated from law and justice, he is the worst of all."

Christianity revealed that what makes man truly human is not participation in city of man but in city of God, that is Church: the body of Christ. It does not suffice to imitate fellow-citizens to rise from condition of beasts and animals. Man has to imitate God himself. This marked a decisive shift from pagan cultures. All what was heretofore holy was profaned. Christianity desacralized the earthly order, and demonstrated in its very centre the presence of demonic "powers and principalities". The foundations of city of man were laid bare. What was seemingly the most magnificent achievement of man has its origins in crime, in death of the Innocents.

Is body of Christ political? What is the relation between theology - monotheism, polytheism, messianism - and politics? Are republics established on violence and suffering? Is political

body always built on dead bodies? Can there be a Christian republic? Can modernity be freed from a theological-political problem? What is the nature of contemporary civil religions?

II. CONTENTS

- The body of Christ. Augustine, Shakespeare, Ernest Kantorowicz
- Sovereign body. Thomas Hobbes, Carl Schmitt, Jan Assmann
- Social body. Erik Peterson, Gershom Scholem, Jacob Taubes
- Revolutionary body. Hannah Arendt, Józef Tischner
- Modern body. Zygmunt Bauman, Witold Gombrowicz, Richard Rorty, Giorgio Agamben

III. METHODOLOGY

Seminar discussion
Commentary of texts

IV. EVALUATION

Participation in the discussion

V. SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae, Dominum et Vivificantem, Sollicitudo rei Socialis, Centesimus Annus, Ut unum sint, Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*

Benedict XVI, *Spe salvi*

Augustine, *City of God*

Shakespeare, *Richard II, Tempest*

Ernest Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology*

Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

Carl Schmitt, [Political theology](#)

Carl Schmitt, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes: Meaning and Failure of a Political Symbol*

Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism*

Gerschom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*

György Geréby, *Political Theology versus Theological Politics: Erik Peterson and Carl Schmitt. New German Critique 2008*

Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*

Jacob Taubes, *The Political Theology of Paul*

Józef Tischner, [The Spirit of Solidarity](#)

Giorgio Agamben, [Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life](#)

Richard Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics: Philosophical Papers: v.4*

Richard Rorty, *Irony, contingency and solidarity*

Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*