

Imagining Faith in Contemporary Cultures (Warwick, 8–10 Jun 17)

University of Warwick (UK), Jun 8–10, 2017

Deadline: Nov 15, 2016

Silke Horstkotte

Call for Papers:

(Post)secular: Imagining Faith in Contemporary Cultures

Keynote lecture: Prof. John Milbank (University of Nottingham)

Lecture and jazz performance: Uwe Steinmetz (WAVES/Institute for Liturgy Studies, Leipzig)

Modern Western societies tend to think of themselves as secular in their establishment, and to view religion as a matter for the private sphere. Yet matters of faith continue to pervade our daily lives and to shape our world-view. Whether we believe in an afterlife or think that our lives end with physical death, whether we see the universe as governed by natural laws or reckon with the inexplicable, supernatural or even miraculous, our access to the world is founded upon some sense of metaphysics. Living in diverse societies in which religious affiliation has become a matter of choice, and often not a life-long one, we have to find new ways of negotiating between different religious and non-religious views and beliefs.

In media and public discourse, a so-called “return of religion” is often associated with the rise of fundamentalism and with incidents of Islamist terror against Western targets. In academe, the “post-secular turn” describes both a renewed interest in religion as a social and political force, and a rejection of the postmodern “death of metaphysics”. Although it is frequently called upon, however, the terminology of the “post-secular” remains confused, and its precise meaning elusive. The term has been used to describe a new era in which secularization has come to an end and religion is making some form of comeback; the need to speak about religion outside the secularization paradigm; and the demise of secularization theory. It can refer to the need for political and social engagement with religious as well as non-faith based groups and voices – the return of religion not on a social scale, in other words, but as a discursive aspect of modernity. Yet it can also indicate both a deconstructive critique of the secular, and also of its opposite, religion, as well as an ambivalent discourse on secularity and religion in literature and the arts. Indeed, have we ever fully been secular? Is post-secularism a coherent intellectual-cultural movement, or yet another fleeting epochal descriptor? And has religion really “returned”, or have the media simply become more attuned to its renewed prevalence as an identity marker?

The conference event (Post)secular pursues these questions through a series of encounters between scholarly discussion and artistic intervention. (Post)secular takes up Charles Taylor’s argument that secularity entails not only the secularization of public spaces and the decline of

belief and practice, but also a new set of conditions under which both belief and unbelief occur, a new context in which all search and questioning about the moral and spiritual must proceed. By bracketing the (post), we aim to sidestep the unproductive periodization paradigm, opening up to the breadth and variety of cultural forms through which ideas about faith are articulated (and indeed shaped) in the present.

Planned for 8-10 June 2017, (Post)secular will involve a rolling programme of academic panels and roundtables, as well as musical performances and film screenings by established and up-and-coming musicians and filmmakers from the UK, Ireland and Germany. Held at the University of Warwick, Coventry Cathedral and other local venues, we will seek to engage academics, artistic practitioners, policy makers and the public. We invite proposals and suggestions for artistic/performance contributions, as well as abstracts for papers and panels covering literary, film and media studies, musicology, visual studies and art history, theology and religious studies, philosophy and the social and political sciences.

Topics to be addressed include:

- Going beyond. What does it mean to re-imagine faith for the contemporary world, and how is faith impacting cultural practice? How are artists engaging with matters spiritual and with notions of transcendence, and what difference does it make whether their worldview includes the divine or not?
- Mediation and dialogue. How can literature, media and the arts facilitate encounters between faith-based and non-faith based perspectives? What is the role of novels, films and TV series in interfaith dialogue? Can the arts forge connections not only on a hermeneutic level, but also by creating empathy, and can they shift social imaginaries?
- Secular vs. post-secular. What are the theological and philosophical implications of a shifting imagination? How can theologians, philosophers and social scientists react to shifting conceptual frameworks, as well as to the changed status, institutions and practices of religion in a (post)secular context?

Please email proposals to both organizers by 15 November, 2016:

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Dr. James Hodkinson (Associate Professor in German Studies, Warwick University)
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Reference:

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(accessed Jul 2, 2025), <<https://arthist.net/archive/13935>>.