

Political Mysticism: Dialogue, Dissonance and the Divine.

Wednesday 3 June 2026 13:15 (1h 30m)

This roundtable seeks to bring together mysticism and political theory. Mysticism can be understood as an aspect of theology and spirituality that focuses on devotional practices that attempt to enact some form of union with the divine. In this interpretation mysticism can arguably be discerned in all the world's theological traditions, with these variegated practices also inspiring quite un-traditional explorations of spirituality outside (and often against) any institutionalised faith. The political implications of Mysticism hold the potential for both a subversive voice of social justice and a ritualised vehicle for social harmony, aspects which have been long discussed and debated in various traditions.

Mysticism has influenced a full spectrum of political engagement from anarchists who argue that union with the divine translates to opposition of all worldly power structures, to more institutional interpretations which emphasise the social cohesion brought about through ritualised devotion to the divine. The apparent paradox of emphasising both unity and differentiation simultaneously lends mystical theology to various conversations currently underway in political theory; from post-anarchism to relational ontologies and pluriversality.

The roundtable brings together some experts who share an interest in mysticism but approach it from different angles and backgrounds with the aim of demonstrating that the political aspects of mysticism offer a basis for dialogue between and across the worlds that make up the "international". In this way, it seeks to foreground ways of conceptualising global politics that provincializes western approaches as just one among others, whilst also centring questions of justice and ethics. The hope, and expectation, is that we can learn from each other and encourage others who might share the interest but not know where to start.

Track Classification: Contemporary Research on International Political Theory Working Group