

## Call for Papers

### Nihilism, Truth and World Politics

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The study of international relations, like all knowledge production, is marked by a will to truth that, if Nietzsche was right, is at the heart of the nihilistic history of the West. Indeed, the crisis of truth that has enveloped Western culture since the nineteenth century is as much a problem for IR as for any other academic discipline. We can see this, for example, in debates between communitarian-constructivist and liberal-cosmopolitan camps that forever founder on the question of whether truth is expressible locally or globally. Or in the recent meta-theoretical debates in the discipline that seem to employ the mantra of methodological pluralism as a prophylactic against an uncomfortable confrontation with the question of truth. Meanwhile, even as critical theorists multiply their critiques, they continue to confront Nietzsche's challenge of whether no-saying can be an answer to the collapse of the highest values.

While these and related issues are usually confronted in mainstream and critical circles at the level of epistemology or reflexivity, we propose to re-consider truth-crises in IR by bringing them under the theme of nihilism. After Nietzsche, Heidegger and others, we understand nihilism to be an experience of the crisis of truth rooted in a particular Western experience of the world but with wider implications for other cultures given the global reach of capitalist modernity. However, rather than confront nihilism in its *effects* (by asking how we can 'fix' or bracket the problems of truth), it makes more sense to us to ask after the *causes* of nihilism. Given that those causes are historical-ontological rather than logical-epistemological, we expect that genealogies of nihilism will help us to reflect on problems of truth in world politics today in a way that other approaches cannot match.

Under this broader objective, we propose the following questions as indicative of the sort of topics that we would like papers to address:

- How has the study of IR grappled with the question of nihilism?
- Can Nietzsche's 'death of God' announcement be a guide to understanding the contemporary crisis of truth?
- Is the current crisis of post-truth politics a cause or a symptom of nihilism?
- Can there be a politics of nihilism?
- If there is a world politics, why should its method be called nihilism (Walter Benjamin)?
- Are existential threats such as global warming and terrorism signs of a nihilist crisis?
- Is nihilism's ambiguity a promise or a peril in world politics?
- Is the category of nihilism meaningful outside of European history?
- Can a politics of the world go beyond the nihilist horizon?