

## Political modernity and the responses of contemporary Orthodox theology

16 - 17 January 2014

**Venue:** Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Spittelauer Lände 3, 1090 Vienna, Austria

Organized by the Institute for Human Sciences Vienna and the University of Vienna (Departments of Social Ethics and of Political Sciences).

**Scientific Coordination:** Professor Ingeborg Gabriel (Dept. of Social Ethics, University of Vienna), Dr. Kristina Stoeckl (Dept. of Political Sciences, University of Vienna), Dr. Alfons Brüning (Institute for Eastern Christian Studies, Radboud University Nijmegen).

### Programme

Thursday, 16 January 2014

9:00

#### **Session 1 “Political and social contexts”**

*The aim of this session is to explore the different political and societal contexts in which Orthodox Churches today are developing their political theology.*

#### **Alexander Agadjanian**

*Interpreting and experimenting with modernity in Russian Orthodoxy*

#### **Kristina Stöckl**

*The “religious-cultural disconnect” as a challenge to Orthodox Churches*

10:45-11:15

*Coffee Break*

#### **Dmitry Uzlaner**

*Civil society in Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church*

#### **Effie Fokas**

*Do 'European' religious freedom norms present a challenge to Orthodox Churches?*

13:15

Lunch, IWM Cafeteria

- 14:30                    **Session 2 “Is the symphonia-model still valid?”**  
*This session deals with the questions and theological responses addressed in the outline for this workshop (see “topic”). One discussion-guiding question is: How far can the traditional model of symphonia be applied in today’s political contexts; what different forms of symphonia are there; what are the alternatives?*
- Vladimir Shmaliy**  
                              *TBA*
- Alexander Kyrlezhev**  
                              *On the possibility/impossibility of Eastern Orthodox political theology*
- 16:00                    *Coffee Break*
- Elena Namli**  
                              *Between political theology and state church - the Russian case*
- Andrey Shishkov**  
                              *Political dimension of the Eucharistic ecclesiology*
- 19:30                    *Conference Dinner*
- Friday, 17 January 2014**
- 9:00                     **Session 3 “Alternative Orthodox approaches”**  
*This session continues the discussion from the previous session, but shifts the focus to non-Russian contexts.*
- Aristotle Papanikolaou**  
                              *Divine-human communion and political liberalism*
- Cyril Hovorun**  
                              *Civil religion in the Orthodox milieu*
- 10:45-11:15           *Coffee Break*
- Pantelis Kalaitzidis**  
                              *Eschatology and Secularization: An Eastern Orthodox approach*
- Alfons Brüning**  
                              *Leaving ‘symphonia’ behind? - An attempt to discuss current changes in Orthodox perspectives on anthropology*
- 13:15- 15:00           *Lunch IWM Cafeteria*

14:30

**Session 4 “Outlook and final discussion”**

*This session is dedicated to drawing conclusions, outlooks and comparative assessments.*

**Vasilios Makrides**

*How liberal can Orthodox Christianity be? Possibilities, limitations and obstacles*

**Thomas Bremer**

*Comment*

16:00

*Coffee Break*

**Ingeborg Gabriel**

*On modernity. Remarks from a Catholic Perspective*

*We will also discuss future plans and outcomes of this workshop: publication, follow-up workshops.*

17:00

**End of workshop**

**Sponsors:**



INSTITUUT VOOR OOSTERS CHRISTENDOM  
INSTITUTE OF EASTERN CHRISTIAN STUDIES  
Radboud University Nijmegen

# Political modernity and the responses of contemporary Orthodox theology

16 – 17 January 2014, Wien

## Topic

Political modernity is characterized by a basic tension between individual liberty and collective self-determination (solidarity). Modern political institutions are concrete institutional responses to this tension: the modern democratic state balances out the tension between the individual and the collective through equal participation of all the members of a polity and representative democratic government; the modern human rights regime puts the individual human being first, but conceives of it as a part of a “community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible” (article 29 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

In today’s reality, the basic tensions of political modernity are complicated further by two global developments: from the top we witness the emergence of supra-national forms of regulation, which defy direct democratic control at the national level (e.g. the global capitalist system); and from the bottom we observe a pluralisation of societies (through migration, individualization etc.). As a consequence, modern societies are characterized by a growing sense of insecurity regarding effective forms of collective self-determination and legitimate government and they are affected by a diminishing consensus about the “good”, about what holds a society together.

Orthodox Christian Churches in the contemporary world appear particularly challenged by the task to conceptualize their relationship with the state as well as with society under these conditions of political modernity and societal pluralism. In this workshop, we want to start our conversation from the relational triangle church-state-people: Firstly: Do Orthodox Churches today conceive of this triangle in terms of church, state and a people (a nation) or in terms of church, state and persons? What is the difference between these two ways of thinking about the relationship in theological terms and what consequences does it have for a contemporary Orthodox political theology? Secondly: How do Orthodox Churches today conceive of the state and its role for human well-being? The modern democratic state is a polity of shifting majorities and fluctuating coalitions, a political form of changing, democratically elected governments and leaders on the basis of constitutional rights guaranteed by the state. We furthermore live in a post-national political constellation (Jürgen Habermas), where many decisions are taken on the supranational level. What do democratization and globalization mean for the historical loyalty of the Church to worldly rulers (the symphonic model)? Thirdly: How do Orthodox Churches today think about themselves, about the role and place of the church and its social function in an increasingly pluralistic and fragmented society? How do they define their relationship to the liberal project of political modernity (human rights and democracy) theologically as well as politically?

What we hope to get out of this meeting is an overview over the possible range of answers which Orthodox theology today holds in store in front of the problems of political modernity. We also hope to get a clearer sense of the dynamics of the inner-Orthodox conversation on these issues, across national and linguistic borders. For this reason we have invited participants of a Russian, Greek, Romanian and Serbian background, as well as representatives of Orthodox Christianity in the West.