

## Politics and the Sacred

This path-breaking book argues that practices of the sacred are constitutive of modern secular politics. Following a tradition of enquiry in anthropology and political theory, it examines how limit situations shape the political imagination and collective identity. As an experiential and cultural fact, the sacred emerges within, and simultaneously transcends, transgressive dynamics such as revolutions, wars or globalisation. Rather than conceive the sacred as a religious doctrine or a metaphysical belief, Wydra examines its adaptive functions as origins, truths and order which are historically contingent across time and transformative of political aspirations. He suggests that the brokenness of political reality is a permanent condition of humanity, which will continue to produce quests for the sacred, and transcendental political frames. Working in the spirit of the genealogical mode of enquiry, this book examines the secular sources of political theologies, the democratic sacred, the communist imagination, European political identity, the sources of human rights and the relationship of victimhood to new wars.

Harald Wydra is a Fellow of St Catharine's College, Cambridge. He has previously taught political science at the University of Regensburg, held visiting fellowships at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (Paris) and the National University of Australia (Canberra), and was Visiting Professor at L'université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. He is the founding editor of the journal *International Political Anthropology*, and his books include *Continuities in Poland's Permanent Transition* (2001), *Communism and the Emergence of Democracy* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), *Democracy and Myth in Russia and Eastern Europe* (2008, co-edited with Alexander Wöll), and *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality* (2015, co-edited with Agnes Horvath and Bjørn Thomassen).

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-07537-5 - Politics and the Sacred  
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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107075375](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107075375)

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First published 2015

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

ISBN 978-1-107-07537-5 Hardback

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To Sandro

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## Acknowledgements

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Any book of similar scope owes substantially to the advice, friendship, and generosity of many others. I have tried to follow their advice wherever possible. Many of the ideas outlined here have been presented to different kinds of audiences in Acquapendente, Bamberg, Bergamo, Berlin, Bielefeld, Bolzano, Brussels, Canberra, Copenhagen, Cork, Cuacos de Yuste, Fribourg, Innsbruck, Konstanz, Maastricht, Osaka, Oxford, Preston, Sydney, and Waterford. During a visiting fellowship at the Australian National University, Paul ‘t Hart and Robert Goodin were perfect hosts. Some of the ideas were rehearsed in a graduate seminar on East European Memory Studies, which I co-organised with Sasha Etkind. Michel Dobry and Jean-Charles Szurek made it possible for me to take up a Visiting Professorship at L’université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense. I am very grateful to the Centre of Research in the Arts, Social Sciences, and Humanities (CRASSH) at Cambridge University, which generously funded three conferences in which many of the ideas presented in this book took shape. Since our encounter in the snowy Austrian Alps, Roberto Farneti’s friendship and exemplary scholarship accompanied this project. I owe a particular debt to Christian Illies, who showed me the nuances of the pleasure of a dutiful life. Bernd Giesen’s stimulating work has been invaluable in clarifying a number of thoughts. The members of his graduate seminar at Konstanz University made me think about some of the arguments in Chapter 5 in quite a creative way. The spiritual companionship of Benoît and Emmanuelle Chantre has illuminated many of my reflections. The intellectual journey at the heart of the book is most closely associated

Chapter 3 is a substantially revised and extended version of the article ‘The Politics of Transcendence’, published in *Cultural Politics* 7(2) (2011), 265–87.

Chapter 5 is a slightly revised version of the article ‘The Power of Symbols – Communism and Beyond’, published in *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 25(1) (2012), 49–69.

Chapter 8 is a slightly revised version of the article ‘Victims and New Wars’, published in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26(1) (2013), 161–80.



with the journal *International Political Anthropology (IPA)*, founded one autumn morning in Florence. Agnes Horvath and Bjørn Thomassen were very faithful friends and creative scholars whose generosity was vital to the making of this book. While I am quite conscious of having not always followed their advice, it would not have been possible to even envisage writing on this topic without their encouragement and wisdom.

My college, St Catharine's, has been an ideal frame for developing and discussing ideas. Together with Downing College and the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge, it has provided a constant and a uniquely stimulating environment. I would like to thank especially Barry Everitt, Andrew Gamble, Paul Hartle, Chris Hill, and Graham Virgo. It is almost impossible to express my gratitude to all my students who have heard many of the ideas in this book and have been among my sharpest critics. I am very grateful to John Haslam at Cambridge University Press for being so sympathetic to this project from the very outset and to the anonymous peer reviewers, who made very useful suggestions for improving the argument. Many thanks also to my copy-editor Joseph Garver for all his precision, diligence, patience, and good advice on the typescript.

At an early stage of bringing the arguments together, James Alexander, Tarak Barkawi, Devon Curtis, Alexander Düben, and Arpad Szokolczai were immensely helpful in giving a more distinctive turn to some of the key ideas. Furthermore, over the years, I have benefited from conversations with Pierpaolo Antonello, Duncan Bell, Cristina Blanco Sío-López, Elisabetta Brighi, Michael Briant, Antonio Cerella, Jean-Pascal Daloz, Tom d'Andrea, Gergana Dimova, Gregor Feindt, François Foret, Rosario Forlenza, Giuseppe Fornari, Dean Gillespie, Kieran Keohane, Felix Krawatzek, Sandrine Lefranc, Oliver Lewis, Nicholas Long, Maria Mälksoo, Manos Marangudakis, Ziya Meral, Georges Mink, Marcin Napiórkowski, Michael Nedo, Andrzej Nowak, John O'Brien, Wolfgang Palaver, the late Émile Perreau-Saussine, David Reynolds, Camil Roman, Richard Sakwa, Wolfgang Schwentker, Alan Scott, Sara Shneidermann, Sara Silvestri, Kristina Stöckl, Helen Thompson, Mano Gabor Toth, Michael Urban, Henri Vogt, Joe Webster, Phyllis Weliver, Meike Wulf, and Liya Yu.

Without my family, however, this project would have gone nowhere. Anne has been, as always, my sharpest critic, most generous companion, and loving inspiration. Mathieu, Cassia, and Sandro have been the life source behind the book and the creators of many of the wonders expressed here.