Arendt and Hobbes: Glory, Sacrifice, Violence – the Formation of a new Political Imagination?

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TIME: October 15, 2-4 pm
PLACE: Bankstown, Building 1, Room 1.1.114

ABSTRACT: Why does power need glory? This is the question animating my presentation. I argue that the desire for glory is the explicative key for understanding the history of modern political philosophy especially as it concerns the question of sovereign power and the subject of politics. I begin with Hobbes, arguing against Strauss and Schmitt that for Hobbes the desire for glory is more originary than fear which, in turn, has tremendous significance for how we understand the constitution of the Leviathan. I then turn to Arendt, arguing that in a 1944 article titled, "For the Honor and Glory of the Jewish People," Arendt is much closer to Hobbes than is usually thought. I trace this notion of glory and honor in her work, arguing that that it is her changed understanding of honor or glory through a rethinking of the "publicity" of the political that allows Arendt to critique sovereign sacrifice and violence, allowing her to begin to formulate a new political imagination.

BIO: Peg Birmingham is Professor of Philosophy at DePaul University in Chicago. She is the author of Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility (Indiana University Press 2006). She is currently working on a manuscript that traces the contemporary French reception of Arendt's "the right to have rights." She is also working on the problem of glory and violence in modern and contemporary political thought.

The seminar will be followed by refreshments in the X-Lounge.

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