

Clive Hamilton

Kant *versus* Schmitt

in International Climate Change Negotiations

IGN Research Seminar

Monday, 2 December 2024, 16:00 – 18:00
Sitzungssaal 1, AD
WU Wien

It will be argued that two great conflicting worldviews have shaped and driven the course of international climate change negotiations. Although Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant and ‘Nazi jurist’ Carl Schmitt are rarely mentioned in the context of climate change, the approaches of the various parties to the dispute are profoundly influenced by their visions of the world and guides to action. The effort to contain greenhouse gas emissions has been a struggle between, on the one hand, demands for moral universalism and a duty on the part of nations to act co-operatively in the common interest and, on the other, the imperative of national sovereignty embedded in the distinctive cultures of peoples rooted in their territory.

In the case of global heating, the Kantian vision appears to have common sense on its side; a threat to everyone invites cosmopolitan responses. Yet in practice UN agreements have triggered resistance from “anti-globalist” forces—American nativism, China’s ambition to remake geopolitics, and entrenched perceptions in the South that pressures to reduce emissions are colonialism in another form. The climate change imbroglio may therefore be read as another phase in the spatial history of the modern world, one that tragically defies the planetary nature of the climate emergency.

Clive Hamilton is Professor of Public Ethics at Charles Sturt University in Canberra. He has held visiting academic positions at the University of Oxford, Sciences Po in Paris, and Yale University. Prior to returning to academia, he was the director of a think tank, the Australia Institute, which he founded. He has written several books on climate change and two on China. His latest book, written with George Wilkenfeld, is titled *Living Hot: Surviving and thriving on a heating planet* (Hardie Grant, 2024).

Free admission. Please register at: IGN@wu.ac.at