Invitation

Introductory Remarks on the Issue “The Crisis of Representation”

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The introductory remarks of the issue J-RaT 7 function as an invitation to deal with the topic of the Crisis of Representation. The Crisis, in this context, has not only a political and economic dimension, but a cultural, aesthetic and religious one as well. Thus, a serious inquiry into this complex and multidimensional phenomenon requires an interdisciplinary approach. The issue targets the phenomena at hand through 15 contributions. One common aim that holds the issue together is the analysis of the nature of the crisis, which helps to find suitable theoretical frameworks. On the other hand, the term itself functions as a tool that enables the analysis of specific societal developments.

Crisis of Representation; Representation

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It is a risky endeavour to write an introduction for a series of papers which, as a common ground, all tackle the notion of a “Crisis of Representation”. One might reasonably expect a representation of the issue’s content, its circumstances, guidelines, main arguments and aims from a preface. However, when its content is about the crisis of representation itself, this causes problems as the very possibility of a representation is at stake. Can the “Crisis of Representation” be captured and represented in a general introduction, in a broad overview, in a brief sketch? Or in even more general terms: are there ways to represent the “Crisis of Representation” or does this difficulty reveal that “crisis” is inherent to every process of representation? Can it be called “the hidden face” of every logic of representation? Giving an introduction, we cannot further expand these problems; however, we want to invite the reader to engage themselves deeply in the papers presented in the volume at hand. The following paragraphs should therefore be read rather as an invitation than as an introduction.

What we present in this volume started with an invitation. Carl Raschke (University of Denver) and Kurt Appel (University of Vienna, Research Centre for Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society) decided to invite scholars from Vienna University as well as from other international universities to give a talk on the notion of “Crisis of Representation”. The organizers suggested that speakers tackle the task through focusing on neoliberalism, ethno-nationalism, religious conservativism and symptoms of crisis in politics, religion and culture. In comparison to other (maybe more regular) conferences the Research Centre Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Society (RaT) has hosted so far, this one stood out in particular, as it was an adventurous exploration in which we challenged the invited scholars to treat the topic of the workshop in whatever sense they interpreted it. This led to a completely open process in which outcomes were unforeseeable and which led to great curiosity about how the participants would confront the topic.

In total, ten scholars from different academic disciplines (political sciences, Islamic studies, philosophy and theology) followed our invitation to the first workshop on the topic and gave their talks on the 26th and 27th of June 2017. In short, all of them talked about different “crises” each with specific approaches to the definition of the term “representation”. However, despite this vague and fuzzy character that inherently accompanied talking about a ”Crisis of Representation” and what this entailed, it still proved to be a helpful tool to frame and analyze current developments we all somehow seemed to perceive. For this reason, we agreed on organizing a follow-up workshop with precisely the same title. Another seven scholars from various disciplines (political sciences, juridical studies and philosophy) participated in this workshop which took place on the 12th of March 2018. Again, the framework was rather loose, kept together solely by the focus on whatever “Crisis of Representation” could mean.
To us, one major outcome was the realization that we were dealing with a “work in progress”, as the discussion on the topic had only just opened up, even after having concluded the second workshop, and it served as an impulse, for further continuation. Consequently, we wanted to portray this heterogeneity rather than aiming at an eager formation of a common synthesis of the contributions. With regard to the publication, our purpose was to capture this atmosphere, which also meant to urge for a prompt publication within no more than a few months. We are glad that many of the scholars met the tight deadline and sent us their revised texts.

We would very much like to thank Faye Lewis, who did all the English proof reading for us, Manuela Kamper as well as Philipp Schlögl, who did most of the editing of the texts, Natalie Eder for transcriptions, and Marlene Deibl and Daniel Kuran, who were part of the organizational committee of the workshops and esteemed members of the RaT team. Searching for suitable reviewers for each article, too, revealed an interesting aspect on the topic: talking about a “Crisis of Representation” seems to stimulate discourses to cross well-shaped fields of academic research and allows for a refreshing exploration of new and unexpected encounters. However, it was exactly for this reason, that, at times, it was quite difficult to find reviewers whose expertise could cover all the raised fields that were tackled in only one paper. Even though we might not have been able to agree on a definition of “Crisis of Representation”, we were able to successfully raise and discuss new perspectives on developments that societies are currently undergoing.

b) Bearing in mind the highly diverse fields that were confronted in the articles of this interdisciplinary issue, it would have been very difficult – if not impossible – to cover the state of the art beforehand. Therefore, we kindly recommend the respective literature which can be found listed in each article.

Within the three days of discussion during the workshops we noticed a huge variety of approaches that were brought up. If we try to bundle the texts which the authors referred to, we learn that there were at least some recurring references to specific texts; among them the Torah/Pentateuch/5 Books of Moses, especially Genesis, Exodus and Deuteronomy. Regarding classical philosophy, Kant and Hegel stand out as the most discussed authors, especially Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Regarding contemporary philosophy, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida, and Agamben are the respective authors that can be found in several of the contributions. The variety of points of reference show that every author tried to address the topic from his or her respective standpoint.
The following paragraphs contain characteristic quotations that reflect on the different angles of approach on the “Crisis of Representation” which the individual articles of the issue have employed. These quotations are not intended to function as summaries that substitute the course of the respective considerations. They should rather be seen as invitations, or as a glimpse that should enable the reader to retrace what is developed in detail in the articles.

Many of the contributions approach the “contemporary ‘crisis of representation’” (Carl Raschke) by finding points of reference in history. In applying such a historic approach, the “Crisis of Representation” is presented as a matter of political theology that first arose when prophetical thinking challenged ancient oriental orders of sacerdotal legitimation and royal power (Peter Zeillinger, Isabella Guanzini) as well as when Antigone resisted the king’s order and obeyed divine rule (Guanzini). The concept accompanies also the development of the Trinitarian dogma and the notion of incarnation throughout history (Raschke, Daniel Minch) and their manifold transformations until late capitalistic order (Philip Goodchild, Minch). Going back to Hegel (Kurt Appel, Andreas Gelhard, Thomas M. Schmidt) and those who received his thinking i.e. Kojeve, Bataille and the Collège de Sociologie in the 1930s (Schmidt) or Rancière and Honneth (Gelhard), the reader gets important philosophical insights into the contemporary “Crisis of Representation”. A further historic approach that reveals structures of a “Crisis of Representation” follows developments in warfare starting in the 19th century, which resulted in aerial bombing. This particular example reveals a crisis that has its roots in the colonial conception of the non-Western world and that is currently striking back to liberal democracies (Rüdiger Lohlker). Furthermore, such crises may be perceived as an aesthetic problem arising at the threshold of the 20th century (Marcello Neri) or already in Romanticism (Sandra Lehmann). These historic approaches are not an end in itself – as none of the scholars seemed to be primarily interested in historiography. A question that comes to mind is, therefore, if it could be that these historic references created some sort of distance which was necessary to perceive the contemporary crisis of representation, thereby avoiding its unmediated, direct presentation?

There are two further strategies to create a kind of displacement that is necessary to uncover the “Crisis of Representation”, that is an approach via processes of translation and dialogical constellations. For example, Goodchild states (what Astrid Mattes also described in detail) that there “is a crisis of democratic representation when people sense that the decisions, forces and necessities that shape their lives derive from elsewhere”. However, in order to describe this crisis, he translates it into another type of crisis referring to financial issues. He argues “that the dynamics of a credit crisis, such as the Great Financial Crisis of 2007–8, may also shed some light on the dynamics of the political crisis of representation.” Dialogical constellations can be found when Gelhard evokes a dialogue between
Axel Honneth and Jacques Rancière; when Schmidt evokes a dialogue between Paula Diehl and George Bataille; when “Kant’s philosophy of representation” is confronted with Hegel (Gelhard) or when Hegel’s critique on representation (Appel) is confronted with Deleuze’s critique of the critique (Lohlker) or when the Deleuzian and Guattarian interpretation of Kafka is confronted with Kafka’s writing itself (Gerald Posselt). In Guanzini’s contribution one can find a constant dialogue of prophetic and utopian thinking. These dialogical constellations either open up an interspace or create a tension between two poles which seem to be appropriate to approach the ambiguous phenomenon that is inherent to the “Crisis of Representation”. This is further developed in Appel’s article that refers to a dialogical constellation of Christianity, Islam and the secular world. He asks whether they could create an amicable relationship among them by helping each other to establish displacement and decentration towards one’s own tradition and noetic core.

The “Crisis of Representation” refrains from its immediate presentation and reveals an ambiguous or even paradoxical character. As Posselt puts it more precisely: “There is a need to take a closer look at the complex workings of representation” – and of its crisis. Difficulties rise even further, if we relate representation to religion which, for many of the authors, seems to be inevitable. As Mattes states, the “crisis of representation […] relates to religion in a variety of ways, but as neither religion, nor representation, are enclosed concepts, it is a complex task to pin them down”. On the one hand the reader of this issue will reasonably expect that the “Crisis of Representation” is outlined clearly and explicitly (“to pin it down”, as Mattes said); on the other hand, as Olivier Roy explains, the demand and the attempt to make everything explicit (without ambiguity), is already a symptom of the crisis of cultural mediation and representation.

In a few lines, some of these ambiguities are now being sketched: Lehman distinguishes between two meanings of “Crisis of Representation”. On the one hand it is a broad category of interpretation: “the modern order of life is fundamentally characterized by a crisis of representation that extends from the individual relationship with the world to the political system of government”. On the other hand, it “serves as a critical instrument where it is used to question or even delegitimize modern subjectivity”. However, “Crisis of Representation” as an instrument of critique may very well be used in an ambiguous or even divergent way: From left-wing activist groups that criticize hegemonic and excluding structures of representation “to the demand of right-wing populist parties to let the people speak for themselves via direct-democratic procedures such as plebiscites, the principle of representation as a fundamental element of democratic opinion-forming and participation is increasingly being questioned.” (Posselt) In a similar manner, Hans Schelkshorn presents socio-political developments as a consequence of a representational crisis, which then evoke a new “Crisis of Representation”: “On the one hand, the New Right emerges as a reaction against
the representational crisis in modern societies during the last decades. On the other hand, promoting a new politics of representation, the New Right produces a deep crisis of political representation.” Neri points out a deep paradox within the very concept of representation which can be found in various articles of the volume. He asks whether there is an “end of representational order, while representation is still the structure for organizing and governing what is left of modern-liberal democracy”. That means that “representation still rules in (its very) absence. But is that” – as Neri asks – “not what representation is all about? Absence that just seems to be like a presence?”

Once the hegemonic and excluding dimension of representational orders is revealed and representation led into crisis, new ambiguities, paradoxes and pitfalls arise when thinking of non-representation. Posselt talks of the “constitutive role of representation” that becomes visible “in every act of speaking” as well as when we encounter others: “We always already represent others – whether we like it or not”. According to Lohlker the core of the problem may be seen in the “creation of a position of judgment, subduing the other in a totalized representation, and leading to a hierarchical construction of the world”. Paradoxically, this totalizing character of representation is also combined with a “negation of representation”. This reveals to be the secret history of Western modernity and its colonial approaches to the world: “Crisis of Representation” as non-representation or denied representation of whomever is construed as the non-Western other. As Appel points out, the program of (pretended) total depletion of representation would mean “invisible omnipresence of power”.

As it seems that “we cannot [and maybe must not?] escape the process of representation” (Posselt), we have to ask ourselves whether the dysfunctional order of representation is “the only one with which we are familiar” (Neri). Can there be “a new logic beyond this ‘old’ logic of representation” (Lohlker)? Are there any alternatives beyond representation or of a transformed understanding of it – alternatives that can be found in literature (Posselt), poetry (Lehmann), art as performance (Neri), the prophetic tradition of religions (Zeillinger, Guanzini), the utopian tradition (Guanzini), or in non-Western conceptions (Lohlker)? May alternatives be found in philosophy as well, where “a shift from representation (Vorstellung) to presentation (Darstellung)” (Gelhard) occurs? May they be found within the aesthetic programs of religions, when this program is accompanied by a gesture of “ironic-reversal” (Appel)? Does this also direct us towards the “relationship between culture and religion” (Roy) which needs to be re-opened after the (fundamentalistic) loss of the complex forms of balance, meditation, and representation? Is it possible to “overcome the aporias of representation and therefore also the crisis of political representation” by asking for what cannot be represented – and how that may be brought into synchrony with the biblical and Islamic forbiddance of representation (Zeillinger)? Is there a new kind of responsibility which is imposed upon us by the inevitability of representing others (Posselt)?
d)

Targeting these questions, we now turn to short descriptions of the texts. The following part aims at giving an overview of the articles and at enabling the reader to recognize and understand the composition and structure of the issue more easily.

Section I

The issue starts with two programmatic articles by the organizers of the workshops Kurt Appel and Carl Raschke that cover many aspects that will be treated in the following articles. Kurt Appel (“Critiques of Master-Representations: The Political Dimension of the Canon between the Bible and the Qur’an”) points out that cultures inevitably represent themselves in symbols, narrations and certain types of knowledge which, at the same time, protect and mask the subject’s vulnerable and mortal core. With Hegel, Appel shows the ambivalence of religions: On the one hand, the Absolute is seen as the guarantee of all representations; on the other hand, religions are structured by the knowledge that the Absolute can never be represented, which puts an end to every totalizing form of representation. In contemporary society, theology has its task in developing a critique of master-representations. In the wake of this challenge, Appel interprets the biblical canon as an alternative to the narrations and aesthetic programs of the ruling master-narratives. He especially refers to the symbols of the “tree of life”, the Tetragram, the Cross and the recapitulation of the canon in the Gospel of John. According to Appel, the canon offers an understanding of the world as a textuality that can be read as a critique of non-affective systems of representation.

In his text “The Kingdom, the Power, the Glory, and the Tawdry: Neoliberal Hegemony and the “Undoing” of the Demos” Carl Raschke puts forth a reading of Agamben’s “The Kingdom and the Glory”. He follows Agamben’s archeology of economy starting from Trinitarian theology in early Christianity, but in contrast to other approaches, he highlights Agamben’s theory of glory as an important idea for analyzing present day neoliberalism. Nonetheless, the notion of glory – which for Agamben holds the meaning of the political zone of acclamations, ceremonies, liturgies etc. – is further developed by the investigation of Agamben’s rather vague statement that contemporary democracy is based on glory disseminated by the media. The politics of glory not only transposed to secular politics, but furthermore, its aesthetic dimension today has to be understood as virtualization of politics within a mechanism of “symbolic economies” which Raschke describes. Moreover, Raschke takes a decisive turn by suggesting that Agamben’s mediatic glory today turns out to be the tawdry, which points not only to a crisis of the symbolic economy but to a “Crisis of Representation” which affects the political itself. At this point Raschke connects his analysis of neoliberalism with Bernard...
Stiegler’s notion of a “cognitive capitalism”. Through Stiegler’s interpretation of the exteriorization of memory (hypomnemosi) Raschke points out that Marx’s theory of commodification today has reached the point of a commodification of truth. This is related not only to a culture of extreme virtualization but also to a form of reversed neoliberalism which attempts to remake the state, a phenomenon that Wendy Brown has described as *undoing of the demos*.

**Section II**

Subsequent to the initial two contributions, which give a broader introduction to the topic and introduce the reader into the field, the two articles within the following section link questions of the “Crisis of Representation” and faith or religion with an economic approach.

In his contribution “What Kind of God is Money Anyway? An Investigation into the Theological Structures of Capitalism and Gnosticism”, Daniel Minch presents a theological critique of the present domination of economic rationality in social and political discourses. He refers to Philip Goodchild’s analysis of capitalism as a belief-system, but moreover he aims at specifying the theological patterns and structures which are inherent in the deification of money in present day capitalism. For this purpose, Minch draws on the history of Christian experiences as a collective past and elaborates a hermeneutically nuanced recontextualization of ancient heretical traditions. In this context, Minch relates Goodchild’s thesis with Devin Singh’s attempt to use incarnation as a hermeneutical tool to understand the theology of money. On these grounds Minch can show that an incarnational relation between money and currency points to a distinctly gnostic understanding of the theos of money.

In his article “Limits to Globalization and the Loss of Faith”, Philip Goodchild illuminates how the dynamics of globalization are deeply rooted in faith in the future. However, times of globalization come with new politics and are characterized by secularization processes. This is why limits to globalization fiercely challenge the above-mentioned faith in the future, which results in contradictory requirements on faith, which Goodchild ostensively links to developments in the credit crises of 2007–08.

**Section III**

In the contribution “Globalization and the Crisis of Culture and Religion” by Olivier Roy, he investigates the crisis of culture and religion, as well as of the state, illustrated by Islamic fundamentalism. Roy expounds today’s problem of the requirement to make every aspect in life explicit, which, he rightly argues, functions as an antagonism to culture which further leads to a crisis of culture.
In his article “Representation with/out Representation: Saudia Arabia as a Hidden Face of Globalization”, Rüdiger Lohlker confronts the issue’s topic from a non-Western point of view. Olivier Roy’s argument of a loss of cultural mediation and the inner complexity of religious systems plays an important role in Lohlker’s considerations as well. His article links three heterogeneous parts in an unexpected and creative manner: starting with an analysis of Deleuze he criticizes (Western) concepts of representation operated by a structure of universally extended judgement. This operation leads, on the one side, to a universal hierarchical order (everything is an object of judgement), and on the other side it leads to mechanisms of exclusion of those to whom representation is denied. As the second part of the article shows, this structure is mirrored in a certain type of warfare, especially in aerial bombing, first exerted in colonial wars. Lohlker describes how structures of representation/non-representation can help to contextualize these forms of warfare. Those exact structures however tend to turn against Western countries, creating what we call a “Crisis of Representation”. In the third part of his article, Lohlker discusses the hitherto described forms of totalizing representation and denied representation regarding the contemporary relation between Saudi Arabia and Western Countries. Furthermore, topics such as the relation between politics and religion, the loss of religious- and cultural diversity, as conveyed for centuries, and the mutual support of Western democracies and non-democratic regimes play an important role.

Hans Schelkshorn, in his article “The Ideology of the New Right and Religious Conservativism. Towards an Ethical Critique of the New Politics of Authoritarianism”, analyses current developments in European liberal democracies which can be described as an erosion of the democratic constitutional state and the universalistic dimension of Christian ethics. As in Lohlker’s article the relation between politics and religion, two systems of representation, is thereby at stake. Schelkshorn shows that the generally applied categories like “populism”, “friend-enemy scheme”, and “neo-fascism” cannot capture the ideological matrix of the New Right which is opposed to the universalistic claims as expressed in the ideas of Enlightenment (e.g. cosmopolitism, or Human Rights) as well as Christian ethics. They are replaced by a neo-pagan, illiberal agenda promoting ethnic homogeneity and autochthonous citizenship in an organic society over cultural and constitutional mediation of diversity among a people. As a case study, Schelkshorn discusses Viktor Orbán’s synthesis between New Right ideology and Christianity by uncovering its contradictory elements.

Astrid Mattes’ article “Liberal Democratic Representation and the Politicization of Religion” is the last one in the third section of the volume. Like the three preceding papers, it discusses structures of representation and their crises with regards to the relation between politics and religion and confronts, as a case study, the current situation of Austria. Mattes adopts the differentiation of formal, descriptive, symbolic and substantial representation and discusses their respective pitfalls interpreting the crisis of political representation foremost as a crisis of
liberalism. Difficulties arise especially when it comes to the topic of religion which tends to play an increasing role in identity politics. Liberal democracies are facing the difficulty of how and to what extent religious group identities can be represented. Mattes campaigns for a de-politicization of religion, which does not at all mean its disappearance; on the contrary, liberal democracies have to find “plausible places for religion in society” as well as balance religious diversity.

The articles of the third section increasingly reveal the question of the symbolic dimension of religious identity and group affiliation in processes of (political) representation; a question that functions as a bridge to the first article of the fourth section, which deals with the philosophical dimension of the triangle of politics, religion and representation – and its symptoms of crisis.

Section IV

Thomas Schmidt’s article “Symbolische Praxis und normative Struktur. Die Krise der politischen Repräsentation in der Perspektive einer ‘Soziologie des Sakralen’” starts with an analysis on the intertwining of normative structures, the symbolic practice and the dimension of the imaginary which is at work in every process of (political) representation. Political crisis arises if the equilibrium of this constellation is disturbed. Schmidt confronts the reader with the question of the role of religion within this process of mutual influence referring especially to Paula Diehl, Georges Bateille’s project of a “Sociology of the Sacred”, and to Cornelius Castoriadis. Religion, is, according to Schmidt, an important factor in political and societal forms of representation and has to be seen in its intrinsic ambiguity expressing or producing destructive as well as mediating and creative forces.

In his article “Bewährung der Gleichheit. Dialektik und radikale Demokratietheorie” Andreas Gelhard continues on the philosophical question on democracy, politics and representation. He confronts two dialogical constellations: the first one deals with Hegel’s criticism of Kant’s philosophy of representation and can be understood “as a shift from representation (Vorstellung) to presentation (Darstellung)”. The second one deals with a discussion between Axel Honneth and Jacques Rancière showing that Rancières concept of radical democracy is much closer to Hegel (and Adorno) as Honneth’s theory of recognition. In line with Hegel and Rancière, Gelhard opposes, as an ultimate aim, processes of learning and acquiring competences that try to resolve dissent in mutual recognition as an ultimate aim and espouses the confictual process of presentation as “probation” or “verification” (Bewährung) of equality. This verification, however, must not be mistaken as mere identity-assertion but carries “out a liberating break with given identities”. Within the actus of dissented disidentification of natural identities, equality can occur within the realm of inequality and politics is stimulated.

Over the course of the articles of the fourth section, again and again we come across a non-representable moment that cannot simply be captured in the ho-
mogenous structure of representation (Schmidt) or resolved in procedures of mutual recognition (Gelhard). Peter Zeillinger, in his article “Repräsentation einer Leerstelle, oder: Auszug ins Reale. Zur politischen Bedeutung des biblischen Exodus, der historisch nicht stattgefunden hat”, points to this very moment which may also be coined as singularity, event, void. However, this non-representable doesn’t only lead structures of representation in crisis but will be further developed to a new understanding of representation as well as to an affirmative foundation of the “political”. For Zeillinger there are two main points of reference which at first glance seem to be very divergent but prove to offer many references to each other over an extensive period of time that separate them: the Exodus-Narrative and the political thought from poststructuralist and deconstructive philosophers like Derrida, Levinas, Badiou and Agamben. In an accurate examination of the historical context, the article “reads the invention of the Exodus-Narrative” as a “revolutionary different approach to political power” and its theological foundation.

As Zeillinger showed, within a “strict monotheistic understanding of theology” a new way of understanding “text” or “textual authority” is “invented” as well. Without explicit reference to the biblical or to religious narratives, however, in close connection to the question on text and representation as well as on what cannot be represented, Gerald Posselt, in his article “The Task of Becoming Minor: On the Politics of Representation”, gives a close reading to Franz Kafka’s “In the Penal Colony” – by the way, a narration of enslavement, colonialism and an Exodus that did not happen? Thereby he shows the working of representation, its difficulties, its modes of exclusion, its inevitability, and the responsibility conveyed with the latter. Questions that accompany the interpretation of Kafka’s text as well as the notes Posselt gives on a discussion between Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari are how “those who are excluded from the realm of political representation may speak out and make themselves heard” as well as how one can speak for someone else. Moreover, similarly to Hans Schelkshorn, he asks whether there could be a criterion to distinguish emancipatory politics from its reactionary counterparts when it comes to the case of representing those who are excluded. Posselt argues that emancipatory politics are not only about claims and becoming major but have to adopt a minor use of language. It is about a certain usage of language which reveals a displacement that occurs in language itself. By this, language inevitably assumes a political dimension with collective value. Becoming minor and making a minor use of language doesn’t mean self-minorization. It rather subverts and ironizes (major) language and its denotative function, however, without destroying it. This opens up the possibility of new kinds of representation.
Section V

The last section of the issue is characterized by three contributions that use rather unusual and creative perspectives or lenses to draw attention to different aspects of the “Crisis of Representation”. As two of the articles are entangled with art and as all of them break open future outlooks, these three texts form the last section of the issue and insinuate what we described in the beginning: an opening to an ongoing process.

In her article entitled “Rethinking Parrhesia. Theological-Political Considerations on the Present Crisis of Religious Representation” Isabella Guanzini combines two seemingly separate strands of reactions to crises of representation, Old Testament prophecy and early modern utopia, providing a key to a reading of Pope Francis as a globally public figure. The role and power of the word as well as a way of opening up the future in a socially and politically fruitful manner present themselves in a long historical duration and theological impact. Guanzini shows how Pope Francis draws on these motives in order to find a way of compellingly using prophetical signs in contemporary culture.

In an innovative approach, Marcello Neri focuses on the presence in absence; the representation of something that rules in its absence – or to capture it in two words: he introduces the concept of “as if” in his article entitled “Post-Representational Order and Naked Citizenship”. This raises the question of how something can be in crisis that is not even there. How is it linked with faith, the public sphere, politics, and arts? Neri skillfully interrelates these spheres and directs them towards a performative understanding of religion that illustrates a viable system for a post-representational order during a time of “Crisis of Representation”.

In her contribution “Becoming Real in an Age of Shameless Lies”, Sandra Lehmann deals with the pressing issues of today’s discursive crises, following in the wake of an aesthetic shift in the usage of signification and the common acceptance of a historical a priori marked by postmodern philosophy. In an age defined less by fake news than by a common attitude of shamelessness, Lehmann proposes an alternative narrative of truth and public discourse. Her account of a phenomenology of the real poses a different approach towards the dynamics of a reality that is marked by its temporality and the fragility of signification.

e)

To conclude our invitation, we would like to finish by stating how the discussion on the topic of the “Crisis of Representation” has only just begun. It reveals the necessity of being expounded by various angles and that it needs to be handled with care as the discourse is full of tensions that also characterize the field. As the issue will reveal in detail, the phenomenon of “Crisis of Representation” requests
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a tremendous variety of approaches. In this diversity lies a great opportunity, as it helps us to understand that it is not possible to represent any singularity as well as the non-representable, any ambiguities and paradoxes, which we find ourselves confronted with. All of these motives reveal the necessity of a critique on a representation as something totalizing. Subsequently, this is the reason why this issue aims to invite the reader to continue with the discussions that are raised within the contributions.

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