

Chaos is a perennial source of fear and fascination. As the original “formless void” (tohu-wa-bohu) mentioned in the book of Genesis, it precedes the created world: a state of anarchy before the establishment of cosmic order. But chaos has frequently also been conceived of as a force that persists in both the cosmos and society, threatening to undo them both. From the cultures of the ancient Near East and the Old Testament up to early modernity, notions of the divine have included the power to check and contain, but also to unleash chaos as a sanction against the violation of social and ethical norms. Yet chaos has also been construed as a necessary supplement to order, a region of pure potentiality that grounds reality and provides the raw material of creation, or even constitutes a kind of alternative order itself. As such, it assumes its own peculiar formations that sometimes mirror existing orders and sometimes point toward past or future ones.

The aim of the conference is to trace the genesis and development of the notion of chaos from the ancient Near East to early modern Europe across a variety of texts and discourses. It will address questions such as: How have the images and conceptualizations of absolute disorder been transformed over the centuries? How did prophets, poets and thinkers view the relationship between cosmic and political chaos? And how do pre-modern ‘chaos theories’ influence modernity?

#### ZEIT

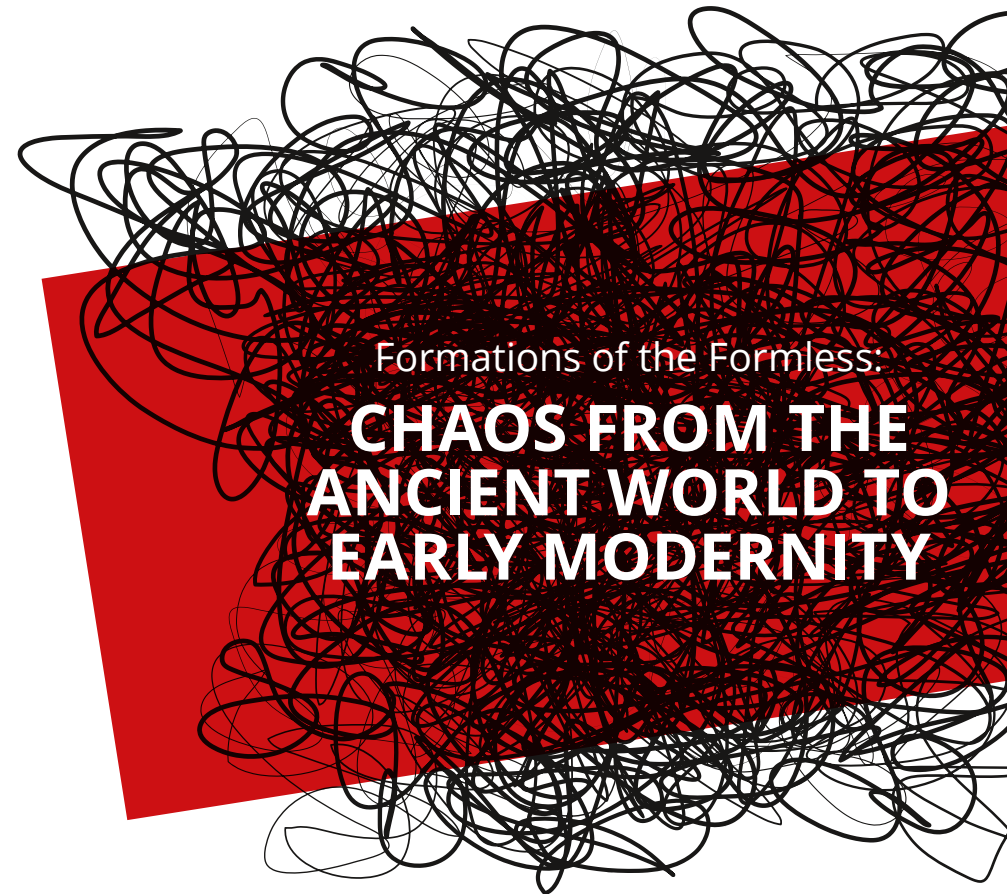
15 – 17 October 2018

#### ORT

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Formations of the Formless:  
**CHAOS FROM THE  
ANCIENT WORLD TO  
EARLY MODERNITY**

**International Conference  
Munich, 15 – 17 October 2018**



DFG-Forschergruppe  
„Natur in politischen Ordnungsentwürfen“  
[www.for1986.uni-muenchen.de](http://www.for1986.uni-muenchen.de)

## MONDAY 15 OCTOBER

9.00 – 9.30 Introduction

9.30 – 10.30 STEFAN MAUL

*Zwischen Chaos und Ordnung – Die babylonischen Lehren von der Dialektik des Werdens der Welt*

10.30 – 11.30 CHRISTOPH LEVIN

*Paradise Established: The Foundation of Kosmos versus Chaos according to Genesis 1–3*

11.30 – 12.00 Coffee

12.00 – 13.00 FRIEDHELM HARTENSTEIN

*„[Wer] hat das Meer mit Türflügeln verschlossen?“ (Hiob 38,8): Zur uranfänglichen Kosmisierung des Chaos in den Gottesreden des Hiobbuchs und anderen weisheitlichen Schriften*

13.00 – 14.15 Lunch

14.15 – 15.15 CHRISTOFFER THEIS

*More Heads – More Chaos? Entities with multiple heads in Egypt in comparison to Ancient Near Eastern motifs*

15.15 – 15.45 Coffee

15.45 – 16.45 FLORIAN MEHLTRETTER

*“Mixed abysses.” Chaos and heterodoxy in late renaissance philosophical poetry*

16.45 – 17.45 KARSTEN FISCHER

*Die Naturalisierung von Chaos und Ordnung: Thomas Hobbes und die Spielarten des Autoritarismus*

## TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER

9.00 – 10.00 GLENN MOST

*Chaos From Hesiod to Derrida and Back*

10.00 – 11.00 FRANK BEZNER

*A Poetics of (Dis-)Order. Negotiating Chaos in Twelfth-Century Thought and Literature*

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee

11.30 – 12.30 VERENA LOBSIEN

*Sympathy Lost. Pastoral Responses to Chaos (Sidney, Spenser and others)*

12.30 – 14.00 Lunch

14.00 – 15.00 GORDON TESKEY

*Agon in Chaos: The Struggle with Thinking and with Matter in Spenser and Milton*

15.00 – 15.30 Coffee

15.30 – 16.30 BJÖRN QUIRING

*The Tartarean Jurisdiction of Chaos in Milton's Paradise Lost*

16.30 – 17.30 BEATE KELLNER

*Chaos in komischer Literatur des späten Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*

## WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER

9.00 – 10.00 REINHARD MÜLLER

*Die Verwandlung von Recht zu Wermut (Amos 5,7). Ein frühes Zeugnis alttestamentlicher Unheilsprophetie und seine kosmologischen Hintergründe*

10.00 – 10.30 Coffee

10.30 – 11.30 ANDREAS HÖFELE

*‘Come to great confusion’: Chaos in King Lear*

11.30 – 12.30 Concluding Discussion