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A Form of Apocalypse Now: Conspiracy Theories, Populism and Trust

Abstract

Many regard conspiracy theorists' and populists' struggle against 'the ruling elite' as threatening Western liberal democracy. Sometimes this threat is described in apocalyptic images, mirroring the apocalyptic tone in many conspiracy theories and in much populist rhetoric. In this paper, I propound considering a framework for a critical dialogue about conspiracy theories and populism based on the understanding that trust is a fundamental category, that belonging is of central importance to all of us when we accept certain discourses as more reliable than others, and finally that there are very basic questions concerning human control and the place of agency to be addressed.