

Jonathan White: **Partisanship in an Age of Polarisation**

As political divisions become sharper in societies around the world, many see the conditions for democracy as undermined. I begin this talk by examining the concept of ‘polarisation’, central to many of these diagnoses. Along with a series of analytical assumptions, anxieties about polarisation express a normative ideal – politics as moderation. I explore the appeal and the limits of this ideal, and why democracy needs im-moderates, more specifically partisans. If contemporary democracy is ailing, the problem lies not with polarisation as such – the symptom of a status quo challenged – but with the challenges that face political parties today.