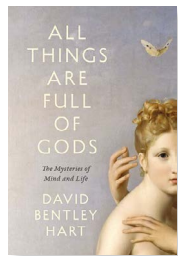# Books & arts

All Things are Full of Gods
David Bentley Hart
Yale Univ. Press (2024)

Four Greek deities meet in a blooming garden to debate the nature of reality. Hephaistos, the god of artisans, argues that everything that exists is material, and so consciousness is an anomaly that the brain must miraculously produce. Psyche, Eros and Hermes — respectively personifying the principles of life, love and language — counter Hephaistos' world-view by positing that life, language and the mind cannot be reduced to mechanical material causes.

This is the premise of *All Things are Full of Gods*, by philosopher and theologian David Bentley Hart, whose own views align with those of Psyche, Eros and Hermes. By presenting these ideas in the form of a 500-page Platonic dialogue, Hart can examine objections to his thesis through the voice of Hephaistos.
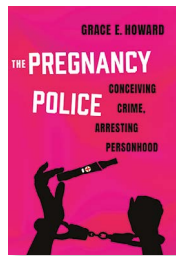
Hart even succeeds at enhancing science with theology. An alliance between materialists and atheists has long held sway in science — but the author refutes such doctrines and advocates for a concept of a god as the absolute and transcendent source of human and physical nature.

All Things are Full of Gods is an intellectual blessing in an age in which it can feel like algorithms threaten our souls. It's hard going, but worth the effort. The foundations of existence and the mystery of consciousness are at stake.

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The Pregnancy Police
Grace E. Howard
Univ. California Press (2024)

For far too long, conversations about reproductive health, rights and justice have been reduced to sound bites and clichés. But decision-making in this field is much more complex. Political scientist Grace Howard's gripping book, *The Pregnancy Police*, is a must-read for anyone attempting to make sense of our current environment — one in which Adriana Smith, a Black mother who was legally dead, was kept alive for four months to gestate a nine-week-old fetus to comply with Georgia's anti-abortion law, without her family being consulted.
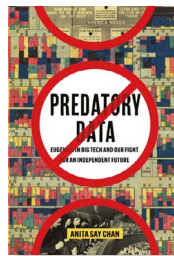
I met Howard in 2017, at a workshop that brought together clinicians, social and public-health scientists as well as legal scholars wanting to reject the false binary of pro-choice or pro-life. She combs through laws, criminal cases and interviews with prosecutors, and describes how pregnant people have been criminalized specifically for their decisions about their pregnancy outcomes.

Howard clearly outlines the ways that pregnancy is policed, as "a process informed by politics and historical inequalities, developed over time by law and ideology". And she shows that the pregnancy police are alive and well, circumventing the rights and will of people with capacity for pregnancy.

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Predatory Data
Anita Say Chan
Univ. California Press (2025)

The global rise of eugenics over the past few years in academic and political spaces might seem sudden and unexpected. But in *Predatory Data*, information-sciences and media scholar Anita Say Chan brings together 200 years of threads that weave a clear link from the early eugenics movement to its current incarnation. As she shows, data have long been used in dubious ways to prop up the discredited ideas and practices that aim to improve the supposed genetic quality of human populations.
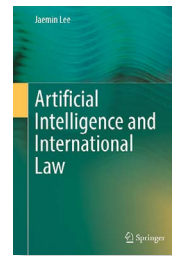
Little is new, she shows, except for the scale of data. For example, in the late nineteenth century, Francis Galton set up a programme in which people gave personal data to learn more about how they compared with others in traits such as strength. He used their data to develop comparative methods to further the nascent field of eugenics.

Chan demonstrates that, throughout history, eugenics movements have used misleading graphs and statistics — and the incorrect idea that big data are always objective — to undermine democratic ideals and push the idea that the ruling class are a "cognitive elite". Yet, she also provides hope, imagining a future that centres marginalized communities and breaks away from the data-driven, "majority-based" policies that reinforce injustice.

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Artificial Intelligence and International Law
Jae Min Lee *Springer* (2022)

With the dangers of deepfake videos, liabilities in autonomous-vehicle accidents and copyright concerns on the rise, governments need to regulate artificial intelligence (AI). But AI is evolving quickly, and legal systems worldwide are racing to catch up. With *Artificial Intelligence and International Law*, law scholar Jae Min Lee offers a timely, in-depth exploration of how international legal frameworks must meet AI's challenges.

The European Union and South Korea have each enacted relevant legislation, and others are following suit. But these localized approaches need to be harmonized.

Lee explores how concepts in international law — sovereignty, jurisdiction and state responsibility, for example — can address AI issues amid geopolitical tensions and technological competition. He outlines models for international AI governance, proposing practical rules on cross-border data governance, extraterritorial privacy laws, national-security risks and ethical standards for algorithmic decision-making.

Finally, Lee warns against waiting too long — international governance is needed before challenges become too deeply rooted. This clear, sharp book is an essential resource for legal scholars, policymakers and technologists.

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