

The Analytic-Continental Divide in Political Theory

Workshop

TheoryLab

School of Politics and International Relations
Queen Mary University of London

24-25 April 2019

Programme

Wednesday 24 April (Arts Two 316)

9.45 – 10 am

Welcome and opening remarks

10 am – 12 pm

Katrin Flikschuh: 'Political Theory without Borders: Analytic/Continental, Western/Non-Western'

Lawrence Hamilton: Traversing the Analytic-Continental Divide: 'Representation' in Political Theory

12 – 1 pm

Lunch

1 – 3 pm

Clare Woodford: Beyond the Analytic and Continental Divide: Critchley, Derrida, and Cavell

David Owen: What is Orientation in Political Philosophy? Within, between and across the Analytic-Continental Divide

3 – 3.30 pm

Coffee/tea and refreshments

3.30 – 5.45 pm

Gordon Finlayson: Some Neglected Alternatives to the Analytic-Continental Divide in Political Theory

Roundtable on Clayton Chin's *The Practice of Political Theory* (Clayton Chin, Joe Hoover, David Owen and Paul Patton)

Thursday 25 April (Laws 100)

10 am – 12 pm

David Howarth (University of Essex): Logics, Causality and Critical Explanation: Poststructuralist Discourse Theory and the New Materialism

Gulshan Khan (University of Nottingham): On the Analytical/Continental Tendency

12-12.45 pm

Lunch

12.45 – 2.45 pm

Varun Uberoi: The Bristol School of Multiculturalism: Neither Liberal nor Continental

Clayton Chin: The Concept of Belonging: Critical, Normative and Multicultural

2.45 – 3.30

Concluding discussion

The workshop is funded by a Leverhulme/British Academy Small Grant. Participation is free, but participants should register by emailing [Lasse Thomassen](mailto:Lasse.Thomassen).

Katrin Flikschuh (LSE), 'Political Theory without Borders: Analytic/Continental, Western/Non-Western'

The analytic/Continental divide has characterised Anglophone philosophy and political theory since the end of WWII. The perceived divide is less stark both on the Continent and in American philosophical thinking, where pragmatism often helps to soften divisions. More recently a new divide is gaining currency – that between Western and non-Western political and philosophical thinking. Though the sentiments are less acrimonious, the tendency towards 'pigeon-holing' remains equally notable. This talk examines some of the perceived reasons for divisions in political and philosophical thinking and asks whether these reasons do withstand scrutiny.

Lawrence Hamilton (University of the Witwatersrand and University of Cambridge): Traversing the Analytic-Continental Divide: 'Representation' in Political Theory

Analytic political theorists have tended to conceive of representation in more direct, causal terms than their Continental cousins. The latter emphasize the layered, complex nature of representation, often questioning that very distinction between reality and its representation. In this paper, I shall argue that a coherent account of 'aesthetic' representation can overcome this divide. I identify four main problems with the normal, analytical view of representation as either a matter of 'mandate' or 'independence', sourced in warrants based on relations of principal-agent, trusteeship or identification; and, yet, I show that an 'aesthetic' approach draws from many arguments within the supposedly analytic tradition, in Edmund Burke's time and our own. I then suggest that there are at least four advantages to this account – especially around our understanding of needs, interests, 'the people' and political judgment – that secures the all-important maintenance of a 'gap' between citizens and their representatives. In other words, representation, a central concept for how we format politics, also provides a neat example of how to traverse the analytic-Continental divide.

Clare Woodford (Brighton University): Beyond the Analytic and Continental Divide: Critchley, Derrida, and Cavell

Despite widespread acceptance of the analytic and continental divide in the workings of academia today it is difficult to pin down exactly what the division consists of. However, given the role it plays in partitioning the disciplines of political thought and philosophy this division is a topic that requires greater attention. From blog posts claiming that analytic thought is more rigorous, through assertions about different methods, histories and focus, to Critchley's claim that the division is cultural, the question for academics today is whether or not the division is salient for philosophical rather than political reasons. My

paper will posit that the divide serves little purpose, either unnecessarily separating thinkers and ideas that could complement one another or obscuring more meaningful differences between them that remain unexplored. Instead I will propose that in the area of political thought, we would do better to move beyond the analytic/continental divide and will propose some ways of doing so drawing on the work of Jacques Derrida and Stanley Cavell. It is to be assumed that with access to the best thought from both 'sides' we might be better equipped to tackle the pressing political problems of the 21st century.

David Owen (University of Southampton): What is Orientation in Political Philosophy? Within, between and across the Analytic-Continental Divide

Drawing on, and building from, my *EJPT* article on analytic and critical traditions, this paper expands the range to encompass realist and phenomenological approaches to political philosophy. In doing so it considers two points that were not developed in my prior article, namely, the use of the continental tradition as a resource for 'internal' breaks within analytic philosophy (realism) and the continuation of forms of political philosophy within which the analytic/continental divide is continually crossed (phenomenology). In expanding the argument in this way, I am concerned to situate the analytic/continental divide as not only an obstacle but also as a resource – and to suggest a wider focus on the issue of 'orientation' in political philosophy.

Gordon Finlayson (University of Sussex): Some Neglected Alternatives to the Analytic-Continental Divide in Political Theory

In this talk, I will reflect on the distinction between Continental and analytic philosophy, and on its point. I will consider whether or not a similar distinction picks out distinct modes or styles of theorizing about politics, and whether it can be helpful in political theory. To help orient the discussion I will, first, attempt to bring the distinction to bear on a rough and ready typology of my own styles of theorizing in political theory; second, I will ask, if it can, and if so to what extent it can, make sense of the differences between Rawls's political liberalism, and Habermas's theory of democratic legitimacy; and, third, I will ask if it makes any sense to interpret the later Rawls as a critical theorist.

Roundtable on Clayton Chin's *The Practice of Political Theory* (Columbia University Press, 2019)

Clayton Chin (University of Melbourne), Joe Hoover (Queen Mary), David Owen (University of Southampton) and Paul Patton (UNSW)

Recent political thought has grappled with a crisis in philosophical foundations: how do we justify the explicit and implicit normative claims and assumptions that guide political decisions and social criticism? In *The Practice of Political Theory*, Clayton Chin presents a critical reconstruction of the work of Richard Rorty that intervenes in the current surge of methodological debates in political thought, arguing that Rorty provides us with unrecognized tools for resolving key foundational issues.

Chin illustrates the significance of Rorty's thought for contemporary political thinking, casting his conception of "philosophy as cultural politics" as a resource for new models of sociopolitical criticism. He juxtaposes Rorty's pragmatism with the ontological turn, illuminating them as alternative interventions in the current debate over the crisis of foundations in philosophy. Chin places Rorty in dialogue with continental philosophy and those working within its legacy. Focused on both important questions in pragmatist scholarship and central issues in contemporary political thought, *The Practice of Political Theory* is an important response to the vexed questions of justification and pluralism.

David Howarth (University of Essex): Logics, Causality and Critical Explanation: Poststructuralist Discourse Theory and the New Materialism

The problem(s) of causality, and its connection to matters of explanation and critique, has long been a pressing issue in the philosophy and methods of social science. This paper explores different idioms of causality in the analytical and continental traditions, with a view to clarifying and developing a series of problems in poststructuralist discourse theory, as it has been elaborated by Laclau & Mouffe and others in the so-called Essex School of discourse analysis. In so doing, the paper will bring poststructuralist discourse theory into conversation with the philosophy of "new materialism", especially evident in the work of William Connolly, Jane Bennett, and others (with their roots in the philosophies of Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze and complexity theory). The focus of the discussion will be on their respective models of causality, agency and subjectivity, and the implications of such models for questions of materialism, critical explanation and political analysis.

Gulshan Khan (University of Nottingham): On the Analytical/Continental Tendency

There is a difference between analytical and continental approaches to philosophy and political theory and within both approaches there exists a wide and diverse range of heterogeneous discourses. The nature and characteristics of the differences between the approaches have been theorised in many different ways. Indeed, within analytical philosophy, there are debates and disagreements over the defining features of their own approach. In this paper, I argue that whilst we cannot pinpoint a single tenet that clearly defines and demarcates analytical from continental political theory, the respective approaches exhibit certain tendencies which can be said to characterise the nature of the differences between them. I make the case that analytical approaches have a tendency to adhere to the laws of logic, in particular, the logic of non-contradiction. Consequently, the over-arching activity in analytical approaches is an attempt to solve and resolve problematics. By way of contrast, those in the continental approach tend to accept contradiction, paradox, antinomy and/or aporia as constitutive of existence and life. Continental approaches through a variety of techniques tend to show how the world, history and the present are composed of meaning and value and thus imbued with power relations that cannot be sufficiently expressed through laws of logic. I show that this tendency is evident in ancient philosophy and it is continued in modern and late modern approaches to political theory. This tendency is also evident in the work of those philosophers/political theorists that work at the boundaries of the tendency characteristic of their respective approach. For example, despite analytical philosopher Willard Quine's appreciation of paradox and antinomies, he nonetheless seeks to bring them under the rubric of the logic of non-contradiction. I argue that the analytical/continental divide is a difference that has become sedimented and naturalised over the course of the twentieth century to become a distinction so that it appears to have a permanence and innateness about it. The effect of which is to create a binary opposition or false dichotomy that reinforces the idea that there is a distinction between the respective approaches that consequently and adversely shapes understanding and research. I make the case for an approach that acknowledges the differences between analytical and continental approaches but challenges the very notion that it is a distinction. In addition, despite the differences, it is important to productively utilise the respective strengths of both approaches and I suggest an approach that actively engages with relevant thinkers from both sides where possible such as on shared and overlapping concepts and practices. This is not necessarily or solely to draw out their defining features to distinguish them from each other or to bridge the differences. Rather, the aim of the productive engagement is to enrich our understanding to provide a multi-layered analysis of contemporary concepts and forms of practices and to better aid our understanding about the kinds of struggle needed to address them. I conclude with the suggestion that the analytical/continental divide continues to exist as a distinction separating the respective approaches for as long as philosophers and political theorists continue to operate solely within their respective sides of the divide and therefore to actively perform and enact the distinction in their understanding and practices.

Varun Uberoi (Brunel University): The Bristol School of Multiculturalism: Neither Liberal nor Continental

Bhikhu Parekh, Tariq Modood, Nasar Meer and Varun Uberoi have recently been labelled the Bristol School of Multiculturalism (BSM) and this paper shows why they came to avoid two approaches to multiculturalism that predated their own. The first approach is the liberal multiculturalism of analytical philosophers such as Will Kymlicka and the second approach is the radical multiculturalism of philosophers who combine analytical and continental approaches such as Iris Marion Young. The paper examines the intellectual influences and initial ideas of BSM scholars so as to show why neither the liberal nor the radical approaches towards multiculturalism were attractive to BSM scholars when they began to write about multiculturalism, hence they devised their own approach.

Clayton Chin (University of Melbourne): The Concept of Belonging: Critical, Normative and Multicultural

Contemporary diversity politics is mobilized around debates on the effects of diversity on political community and cohesion. However, social and political theory are deeply divided on the relation between that diversity, liberal–democratic citizenship, multiculturalism and social cohesion. This article argues that a focus on the concept of belonging, which is often employed but rarely examined in detail, illustrates the critical–normative divide between social and political theory. Further, it argues that each has a partial account of belonging that fails to account for the multidimensional and complex nature of diverse belonging today. Instead, it sketches a theory of ‘multicultural-belonging’, which unites the critical and normative approaches and offers key insights going forward in the analysis of diversity, citizenship and multiculturalism.