

***Bonjour à tous, et soyez les bienvenus pour ces deux jours consacrés à la distinction politique gauche-droite!***

Hello everyone, and welcome to these two days dedicated to the left-right political distinction!

***Olá a todos, e sejam bem-vindos a estes dois dias dedicados à distinção política esquerda-direita!***

I want to clarify that I am going to speak here in French. However, be aware that each of the interventions will be translated into the other two official languages of this workshop. We will do our best to ensure that each of you has access to the best possible understanding of the presentations and ensuing discussions.

Allow me first of all to thank the speakers, who do us the honor of their presence and we will benefit from their knowledge in order to advance the reflection around this famous left-right political divide.

But before giving the floor to the speakers, I would like to explain to you the reasons why I wanted to organize this international workshop under the aegis of a philosophy institution (FAFIL).

First and foremost, the reflection that will be carried out during these two days should be of a *metapolitical* sort. But if I want to be a minimum intelligible about such an abstract thing, again should we agree on what ‘politics’ can mean. In this regard, an interesting distinction is consecrated by the French language between two angles of approach. We are talking about ‘*la politique*’, which concerns human activity organized around collective processes such as parties, institutions, elections, and so on. This primarily concerns political scientists and has been closely studied by authors such as Giovanni SARTORI in Italy or Maurice DUVERGER in France, to name but a few.

But there is also ‘*le politique*’, which refers to a more general reflection on political activity and concerns political philosophers much more. To give a more precise idea, a definition has been proposed by the French philosopher and sociologist Julien FREUND, former student of Raymond ARON. The here is:

The social activity which proposes to ensure by force, generally based on the law, the external security and the internal harmony of political unity by guaranteeing order in the midst of the struggles that arise from the diversity and divergence of opinions and of interest.

It is the *diversity* of opinions and their *divergence* that will interest us more than anything, during this workshop.

Is the left-right opposition a good representation of this state of affairs, and what are the rules which organize these conflicts in the discourse? I said previously that the debates will be especially on metapolitics. By ‘metapolitical’ I do not mean here something comparable to meta-physics of ARISTOTLE, which designates the body of knowledge obtained independently of experience (and therefore limited to the field of physics); indeed, it is absolutely not a question of offer here a form of

independent knowledge of '*la politique*'. I don't hear the metapolitical in the sense given by Antonio GRAMSCI, which would consist of a work of ideological mindset through the dissemination of certain values within public opinion (it is in this meaning that we speak today of a 'right-wing gramscism'). By 'metapolitical' I mean something like 'a metalinguistic discourse on politics (in the same sense as Alfred TARSKI's meta-logic or David HILBERT's meta-mathematics), i.e. the study of fundamental properties of a theory or a type of discourse. Political discourse will therefore be our central problem here.

However, this discourse is organized in the tradition around a predominant model: the linear model, which consists of a line separating a left side from a right side and several gradual subdivisions. We most often speak of a 'political spectrum' to designate this continuous line, and the choice of this name is not casual if it recalls the idea of decomposition of light. We also talk about political space, to designate the set of tendencies that make up the domain of discourse Politics. My first question would be: does the left-right distinction embody an exclusive and exhaustive description of the political space? If it is exclusive then nothing can be left and right at the same time. And if it is exhaustive, then nothing can escape the designation of 'left' or 'right'. We see here that this abstract representation includes only 1 dimension, which pits left against right and includes a set of ideologies in each camp, according to a gradation which goes from the extremes towards the centers. By virtue of this linear gradation, the far left and the far right are the two opposite poles while center left and center right are very close to each other by sharing a single ideology: liberalism.

The workshop will consist in questioning the relevance of this representation, and I propose two main questions to organize the discussion. First, how many dimensions are necessary and sufficient to characterize the policy? And second, which is better representation or modeling of politics?

We can see that, beyond the well-known linear scheme, composed of two opposite poles and of a center, other models offer other representations of political discourse by increasing the number of its dimensions. There is in particular the diagram of David NOLAN, libertarian activist of the United States. Nolan offers a two-dimensional representation of the political spectrum: this diagram has a horizontal axis, which represents the traditional left-right opposition, but also a vertical axis which expresses the level of authority of the State with regard to its governed. The combination of the two axes thus produces a richer representation of political discourse, where the question of personal freedom is separated from a left-right axis of a strictly economic type (for NOLAN, the left signifies state intervention in the organization of the economic market, while the right would mean his absence of intervention). It is in particular this type of two-dimensional representation that we find in the following image, supposed to characterize the space of French politics in 2014. The vertical axis is simply

reversed compared to the NOLAN model: statism is located upwards of this axis, while its opposite of libertarianism is located downwards.

It can be seen that this 2-dimensional diagram still contains the typical distinction between *extremism* and *moderation* in political attitudes, insofar as the vertical axis embodies the question of authority and the more or less normative relationship between the state and the individual. Having said that, an objection can be raised against the polar opposition between an extreme left and an extreme right: would these two positions always be opposed to each other, in the most radical way possible?

An alternative model has been proposed to challenge this traditional point of view: it is the so-called '*horseshoe* model', associated with the name of the philosopher Jean-Pierre FAYE. We are witnessing in this model a reconciliation of extremes, as opposed to a center. It is in particular this model which justified the appearance of a neologism: the '*red-brown conspiracy*', thus designating a kind of collusion of the two extremes around a unifying political attitude. This common attitude would, in the opinion of a certain number of philosophers and political scientists, *populism*, that is to say the rejection of the elites who would be located at the center of political space. We will come back later.

Whether or not there is a collusion between the extremes, we see in any case that the distinction even between extremism and moderation disappears once we increase the number of dimensions of political space. Because we can still multiply the number of these dimensions, from the moment where the left-right theme is reduced to an economic criterion.

This is particularly the case in the following diagram, which represents the political space of Switzerland and the positioning of the Swiss Socialist Party within this space. We can see that this model has 4 independent dimensions, each referring to a specific political theme: the regulation of the market, state authority, environmental protection, and migration policy. Another model has been suggested by Pierre OSTIGUY in 2017, which includes 6 axes. On the traditional left-right axis are added 2 politico-cultural axes, 1 socio-cultural axis, 1 socio-economic axis and, finally, 1 axis opposing two positions of a topic that is currently much discussed: *populism* on the one hand, and *anti-populism* (or '*elitism*') on the other. We will have the opportunity to come back to this complex diagram since its author, Pierre OSTIGUY, will be one of the speakers in this workshop.

Some objections can be addressed to these kinds of abstract representation. On the one hand, why immediately accept the spectral representation of political space? The spectrum model assumes a qualitative and quantitative gradation, and we do not see very well what the quantitative aspect can mean in political speech. On the other hand, there is another type of representation likely to characterize this type of discourse: it is the model of the chessboard, where the parts of the political space are governed by a set of relative strategic relationships. There is undoubtedly a distinction between two types of modeling: that of political philosophy and ideologies, more conducive to a spectral

representation; and that of political science and coalitions of political parties, closer to the strategic model of the chessboard.

We can also wonder if the traditional opposition between left and right has a *history* of its own, that is to say a precise date of birth. Many place her in the issue of Louis XVI's royal veto, during the debate in the Constituent Assembly (September 11, 1789). But we can also consider that this opposition is above all an abstract articulation of political discourse, and that it is therefore consubstantial with the reflection on the idea of common good within a public space.

This is notably the point defended by Philippe FABRY, according to whom the ideas of the left and the right did not wait to be named to exist. By virtue of this position, Philippe FABRY considers as there was already a 'left' and a 'right' throughout the history of France and that we can trace this cleavage back to the 12th century period. Other examples of even more cleavage alumni will be presented by the author, since he also does us the honor of his presence in the framework of this workshop.

To conclude this first overview, we cannot ignore the problem of defining left and right concepts. Can we characterize these two notions in terms of ideologies, families of ideologies, or political attitudes taken in a broader sense? The history of cleavage left-right seems to show the opposite, when we know for example that the liberals were classified the *far-left* of the French political space during the 19th century, while they are located in the *center-right* today; or that the ideology of nationalism was of revolutionary inspiration to its origins, while it is identified with the *far-right* today. Left and right therefore seem irreducible to ideologies, but it seems difficult not to define them as such. Ideas go and come behind this cleavage, in other words, and we speak in particular of a 'sinistrotory' movement (or 'dextrorotatory') of the political space when the dominant issues of public debate are moved respectively to the left or the right of this space.

But what is it essentially, when we speak of this left and this right? We don't know much more since the start of my talk. To know a little more and a little better, we will have the pleasure and the honor of knowing the wise opinions of 10 speakers, to whom I will allow to add my own contribution. Everyone will be entitled to 1 hour to give us their explanation of the meaning of the left-right divide, through a presentation and then a discussion with other stakeholders and the public. The speakers will be as follows, in the order of their appearance:

Loïc CHAIGNEAU.

French philosopher. Founder and President of the Institut de l'Homme Total and author of several works on political philosophy, Loïc Chaigneau is currently preparing a thesis of doctorate in philosophy on the work of Michel CLOUSCARD. The speech will be made French.

Patrick CHARAUDEAU.

French linguist. Distinguished professor at the University of Paris 13, founder of the Discourse Analysis Center and specialist in political discourse. The speech will be made in French.

Denis COLLIN.

French philosopher. Former professor of philosophy, founder of the popular University of Evreux and author of a large number of works on political philosophy, among which the recent *Après la gauche* (*After the Left*). The speech will be made in French.

Philippe FABRY.

Lawyer at the Toulouse bar, doctor of law and historian of ideas. Author of a collection of works devoted to geopolitics and the evolution of political ideas in Antiquity to the present day. The speech will be made in French.

Laurent LOTY.

Historian of ideas. Honorary President of the French Society for the History of Sciences de l'Homme, specialist in Diderot's work and the concept of utopia. The speech will be made in French.

Iago MORENO ÁLVAREZ.

Holder of a Masters in Philosophy, political science student at Cambridge University and contributor to several cultural magazines; specializing in the study of populism, nationalism and the media coverage of political discourse. The speech will be made in English.

Pierre OSTIGUY.

Canadian political scientist. Full professor of political science at the University of Valparaíso (Chile), specialist in populism and demonstrations in the Latin American space, especially Argentina. The speech will be made in English.

Ian PARENTEAU.

Canadian political scientist. Professor of political science at the Royal Academy of Saint-Jean, author in particular of a book devoted to the left-right divide and its expression in terms of corresponding political ideologies. The speech will be made in French.

Mark R. REIFF.

American philosopher. Professor of political, legal and moral philosophy at the University of California at Davis, author of several works around the notions of political freedom and justice. The speech will be made in English.

Your humble servant (Fabien SCHANG).

Visiting Professor of philosophy of language and logic at the Federal University of Goiás, my research program focuses on the formal analysis of the concept of disagreement. I am the author of an article on the left-right distinction, as well as a philosophical dialogue on politics and an essay on the philosophy of political language. The speech will be made in French.

And finally,

Carola SCHOOR.

Dutch political scientist. Recent author of a doctoral thesis political science on political style, Carola is a researcher in political communication at the University of Leiden and proposed a thesis on the triadic representation of political discourse. The speech will be made in English.

The workshop will be conducted over two days, and a break will be made every two presentations. A discussion will be offered with the audience at the end of the day, in order to recap the lessons of the day or if someone would like to ask one of the speakers a question that they did not have the time to formulate previously. The event will be punctuated by a round table with all the speakers, around the question of the left-right divide and its significance for the times to come.

There you go, I'm done. I would like to thank the speakers very much for their kind participation in this workshop which, hopefully, will be the first in a series of upcoming events dedicated to the left-right distinction. The future will tell.

Thank you all, and have a good workshop!

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***Obrigado a todos e tenham um bom workshop!***