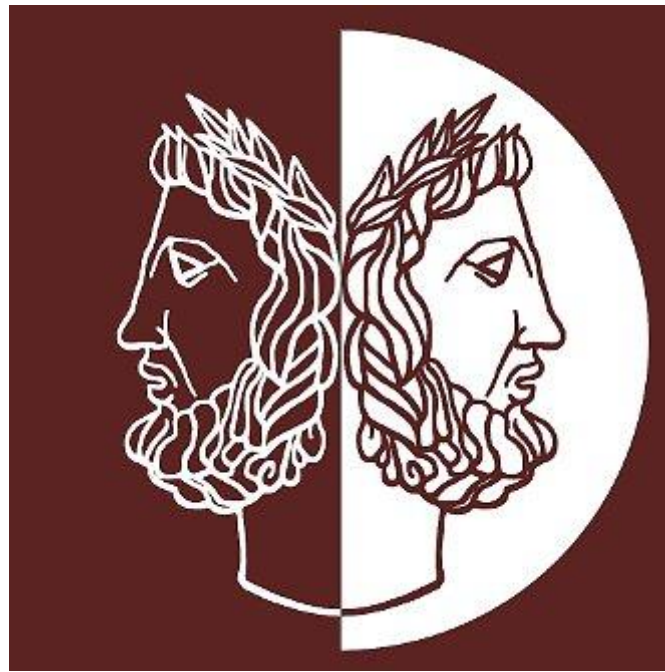


International Workshop *'Left'? 'Right'?*

December 14-15, 2021

(live on YouTube)



Federal University of Goiás (UFG/FAFIL)

Organizer: Fabien SCHANG

Speakers

Patrick CHARAUDEAU (Université Paris XIII)

Denis COLLIN (Popular University of Evreux)

Philippe FABRY (Barreau de Toulouse)

Laurent LOTY (CNRS)

Iago MORENO ÁLVAREZ (Université de Cambridge)

Pierre OSTIGUY (Université de Valparaíso)

Ian PARENTEAU (Royal Military College of Canada)

Mark R. REIFF (University of California, Davis)

Fabien SCHANG (Federal University of Goiás)

Carola SCHOOR (University of Leiden)

Program (Paris time, GMT+1)

Tuesday 14 december

14:00-14:30	Opening of the workshop	
14:30-15:30	Patrick CHARAUDEAU	<i>Populist discourse as a blurring of political issues</i>
15:30-16:30	Denis COLLIN	<i>Left-Right: Unusable Political Categories</i>
16:30-17:00	Break	
17:00-18:00	Philippe FABRY	<i>Proposal for a universal dynamic model of the political divide</i>
18:00-19:00	Ian PARENTEAU	<i>Populism Ideological Trajectory. The Structural and Ideological Reasons for the Contemporary Rise of the Critic of Elites</i>
19:00-19:30	Break	
19:30-20:30	Iago MORENO	<i>The transversality of populism and the contingent nature of the left-right distinction</i>
20:30-21:00	Discussion with the audience	

Wednesday 15 december

14:00-15:00	Pierre OSTIGUY	<i>Axes of political polarization and 'political arcs' connecting left(s), populism and right(s)</i>
15:00-16:00	Laurent LOTY	<i>Making the history of the words that blind, escaping Manichaeism, freeing the political and legal imagination</i>
16:00-16:30	Break	
16:30-17:30	Mark R. REIFF	<i>Moving beyond the left-right distinction</i>
17:30-18:30	Fabien SCHANG	<i>A pragma-semantic approach to the left-right cleavage</i>
18:30-19:00	Break	
19:00-20:00	Carola SCHOOR	<i>The left-right spectrum in relation to populism, elitism, and pluralism</i>
20:00-20:30	Round table	<i>Which left, which right for tomorrow?</i>
20:30-20:45	Closing of the workshop	

Patrick CHARAUDEAU

Populist discourse as a blurring of political issues

Populism has grown considerably in Europe over the past few years (at least in the comments), to the point where politicians label most opposing political parties as populism. As for the analyzes, far from clarifying the question, they make it more complex by attributing various qualifiers, among which: 'ethnicist' and 'reactionary' populism, 'nationalist-identitary', 'nationalist-authoritarian', 'neo-liberal', etc.

We now know the main characteristics of populist discourse: *discourse of victimization* describing the collapse of society of which the people are victims (social downgrading, unemployment, denationalization, dispossession of identity); *discourse of denunciation* of the scapegoat for the collapse (immigration, invasion); *discourse of satanization of the culprits* stigmatizing those responsible by compromise (the political class); *discourse of appeal to the people*, building an image of leader blending into it, and presenting himself as a providential savior. In this intervention we propose to describe, not so much the discourse of the theorists of populism (which we will recall), as the discourse of the 'political offer', from the left as from the right, under its two aspects of enunciative strategy and ideological content, and those of 'social demand'. By observing these discourses, by spotting the commonalities and the differences, this will lead us to show how the populist discourse blurs the traditional political issues.

Denis COLLIN

Left-Right: Unusable political categories

In 1998, the Italian Marxist philosopher Costanzo Preve published a book entitled *Destra e Sinistra. La natura inservibile di due categorie tradizionali* ("Right and Left. The unusable nature of two traditional categories", Editrice Petite Plaisance). This book was an (indirect) response to Norberto Bobbio's *Destra e sinistra*, published in 1994, which defended the relevance of this distinction. Perry Anderson, in the *New Left Review*, had criticized Bobbio, pointing out that labels often last long after they have lost all political meaning. In Rome, the race supporters of the various chariot racing teams had distinct colors. The greens were supported by the people and the aristocracy supported the blues. These divisions between greens and blues survived in Byzantium, but they had lost their original social significance.

The categories in which we have been accustomed to thinking about politics for more than two centuries need to be seriously re-examined. To think, we need categories just as to speak we need nouns, verbs, adjectives and other grammatical terms. And to think politics, we need political categories. But they have to be useful, that is, they have to help clarify what we are saying. This is obviously no longer the case with the words 'right' and 'left'. Right and left, it has often been said, refer to a parliamentary geography that dates back to the French Revolution: in 1789, the supporters of the royal veto were on the right and its opponents on the left. Authority versus liberty, royal power versus democracy, the scene was being set. The workers' movement, for its part, was, from the very beginning, outside this division, which ultimately concerned only the dominant classes. It was with the Dreyfus Affair that things changed. The socialists, who were republican for the most part, allied themselves with the radicals, who also called themselves 'socialist radicals', supporters of private property of the means of production, but ready to introduce numerous corrective measures to prevent class antagonisms from tearing the country apart. The alliance sealed at the turn of the century with the first government in which socialists participated (Millerand) was the real birth certificate of this reformist left that was to play such a great role during the 20th century. Until the end of the 1980s, the right/left division also intersected with a class division: working classes and the "enlightened" bourgeoisie against financial capital and reaction. Similar processes will be found in most of the major developed capitalist nations. This is what ended at the end of the 20th century with the end of the communist parties, the decomposition of the social-democratic parties and the creation of new centrist magmas like Tony Blair's New Labor or the Italian PD.

It is urgent to pour new wine into new wineskins and to re-examine all this in the light of the evolution of social classes.

Philippe FABRY

Proposal for a universal dynamic model of the political divide

The political divide is a phenomenon that affects any constituted political community. It is not a modern phenomenon - only the term 'left-right' is. Many works have been written on this question, models have been proposed, attempting to distinguish what would make the essence of the right and the left, and to determine what dictates the placement of an ideology on the left or on the right of the political spectrum. None have succeeded in asserting themselves fully, blind spots remaining in all these approaches.

The object of this contribution is to present the model recently exposed in a book, a model universally applicable, both in space and in time, to any political community. The main originality of this model is that it is dynamic, and therefore reflects not only the structure of the political divide (moderate 2/3 - radical 1/3), the movement of ideas from left to right (sinistroyre) and the articulation / succession of major ideologies, by dissociating the concepts of political ideas and political sensitivities. It also gives an account of the two main factors of placement in the cleavage identified by the literature (psychological disposition, Tuschman; socio-economic position), and explains their articulation. The model also incorporates the Remondian idea of the 'three rights', which it theoretically enhances, making it applicable outside French society, and exposing its counterpart for the left. Finally, it validates Bobbio's idea of equality as the focus of the left.

This model is powerful, applicable to any political society, at any time, and sheds light on the major current political questions: populist phenomenon, collusion of extremes, intersectionality, etc.

Laurent LOTY

Making the history of the words that blind, escaping Manichaeism, freeing the political and legal imagination

I propose to approach the ideas of left and right by making history, or rather, by making the history of the words 'left' and 'right', of their emergence, of their success, of the displacement of their meanings : the history of their uses.

I will present the history of these words as Marcel Gauchet tried to reconstruct it in an article published in 1992, shortly after the Fall of the Wall, and which he has just re-edited in a version completed in October 2021. This investigation which goes through the history of words is very enlightening, but it is also oriented by a perspective which can be blind and which in turn deserves to be criticized and re-interpreted. Words are not only part of this 'mental tool' that allows us to think, to use Lucien Febvre's expression. There are also many words by which we think we are thinking, and which, precisely, prevent us from thinking. The words 'left' and 'right' are among those terms whose history has come to deceive us. In this case, a historical process of Manichean identification and submission to partisan logics has produced a blockage of thought and imagination. If it seems interesting to dispense with the words 'left' and 'right' to think about what we want, and to arouse the political imagination, the fact remains that the past success of these terms is, on the one hand , the effect of the power of Manichaeism in thought as in action, and on the other hand, the expression of a system of election which combines dualism and gradualism in the political imagination as in legal institutions.

Trying to escape the use of these two terms therefore also supposes questioning the possibilities of escaping a Manichean thought, a question of an almost anthropological nature, and in any case relating to a long history, religions, morals, and finally politics. Another way of approaching the question could be, in a very pragmatic way, to imagine other modes of election than those most commonly practiced, in France anyway. Modes of election can, in a way other than words, inherit deeply the ways of approaching politics or, in turn, structure them without even our realizing it. Such a prospect of mental distancing and legal transformation might perhaps not be limited to slight formal transformations within the framework of an ordinary conception of democracy, but be correlated with other ways of thinking and organizing society. democracy, also to other ways of conceiving and articulating democracy, economy and culture.

Iago MORENO ÁLVAREZ

The transversality of populism and the contingent nature of the left-right distinction

The eurocentric myopia of western academia has reified the left-right distinction as a supposedly objective, natural and universal axis able to explain the essential sources of political conflict in historical junctures and regional contexts of a very disparate sort. Nevertheless, the tides of political change propelled by the progressive and reactionary waves of populism sweeping across the world have proven this ossified conception of the left-right distinction as a misguided preconception, revealing how other cleavages (i.e. the vertical axis of populist politics) have a potentially tremendous force to redraw the lines of antagonism within the social camp. On the one side, assembling broad political subjects through a discursive crosscutting of the allegedly indelible left-right distinction; on the other, evidencing such axis as a distinction absorbed or internalised by neoliberalism's logics of difference (in the Laclausian sense of the term).

Vis-à-vis the experience of PODEMOS and VOX in Spain, my presentation will resort to an examination of the political eruption of these two antithetical populist forces (usually described as competitors 'from the left' and 'from the right') to evidence the limitations of such distinction; not merely as a frame to think the organic crisis of the Spain's 1978 Constitutional Regime but to examine the morbid political dynamics of neoliberalism's collapse. As will be proven, both cases provide splendid examples of actors whose abrupt emergence as prominent anti-establishment forces was characterized by an explicit and controversial rebuttal of the left-right distinction as an 'outdated division' or a 'thimble game' and the exploitation of alternative imaginations/articulations of the political (e.g. peoples versus castes, disenfranchised national citizens against enriched globalist elites). This makes their examination a valuable opportunity to understand left-right's distinction's limits and weaknesses or its declining significance to understand the course of contemporary politics.

In order to deliver this task, I will defend the potentialities of thinking of populism as a 'transversal' phenomenon endowed with privileged qualities to reveal or illuminate the contingent and fragile nature of the left-right distinction. For it, I will resort to the conception of 'transversality' (in Spanish: *transversalidad*) theorized by post-gramscian authors as Iñigo Errejón or Álvaro García Linera. A concept used to understand the counter-hegemonic aspirations of populist antagonists seeking to 'kick the chessboard' (as formulated by the gramscian-peronist intellectual John William Cooke) instead of playing constrained by the rules (i.e. the fundamental cleavages, distinctions and systems of differences) defined by the hegemonic discourse and the distribution of pieces of a 'game' started by others.

In the last instance, my proposal will be to conceive the left-right axis as a historically sedimented distinction with a contingent and declining significance. In other words, a politically surmountable distinction that will most surely be put into question and cross-cut by the major political phenomena of our immediate future; a horizon anticipated by phenomena such as the Italian 5 Star Movement, the Salvadoran Bukelism or Mexico's Obradorism among others.

Pierre OSTIGUY

Axes of political polarization and ‘political arcs’ connecting left(s), populism and right(s)

This intervention presents the transformation of ‘pre-political’ social tensions, of a sociological but also socio-psychological nature, into observable axes of political polarization. Among those axes, two rather different aspects of the famous left-right dyad play a crucial role. Our approach is ‘spatial’ in the sense of Laponce (1981), who familiarized us with the transformation of the sociologically ‘down’ into a political left, starting with the French Revolution, and the transformation of the sociologically ‘above’ into a political right. One cannot, however, reduce the political (in terms of left and right) to attitudes towards the rich, the Prince, and God, as Laponce does. Fear of entropy, the dystopia of the collapse of order, fear of the wretched wanting to take my property equally play a central role at a basic socio-psychological level in the attraction –through fear as much as desire– of ‘the’ right. Socio-psychological considerations also come very much into play centrally in ‘the’ left.

As much theoretically as empirically, like Laponce we maintain that there are *invariants*, the concrete historical content of which varies, of ‘left’ and ‘right’. At the empirical level, political scientific analysis has amply noted the repeated existence of *two* left-right dyads, which are partially related. One has to do with wealth or income distribution, socioeconomic inequalities, property rights, labor, businesses, etc. and the other, with the level of authority *and* homogeneity required to maintain a certain social order or –conversely and in terms of authority with the level of deliberation and breadth of consultation necessary to arrive at legitimate decisions. At a less abstract level, this second dyad has to do with the level of permissiveness on topics such as homosexuality, immigration, cultural and ethnic differences, recreational drugs, delinquency, and mores.

These two dyads take the form of two axes (each of which can, of course, include a center). But they are far from encompassing the whole of political representations of social differentiation –particularly in terms of economic and symbolic capital. This is where the question of populism comes in, bringing with it, in fact, three additional dyads (Ostiguy 2017), here tightly related. In total, we thus have five axes –*six*, with the synthesis of ‘left’ and of ‘right’. These can (and should) be ordered in a logical, non-arbitrary, non-commutative way, like ‘spokes’ in a wheel of axes of political polarization. This ‘wheel’ of axes allows us to conceptually comprehend the relation between lefts, populism, and rights. For societies with a populist presence, it moreover serves to politically order the different party systems, including in terms of party oppositions. The notions of angles, arc, and opposed arcs thus take on central heuristic importance. To be sure, at a general level, the two left-right axes (generally represented as an X) may suffice for describing political party differences in societies without the existence of populism –and without the existence of separatism, irredentism or independentist movements against a supranational state.

Political ideologies or political families do *not* give rise to the categories of left and right. Rather, different ideologies or political families have historically accentuated and favored (and at times in a changing way) the normative pole(s) of one, or both, such axes. Overall, the wheel of axes of political polarization is an essential analytical and descriptive tool, especially for political science.

Ian PARENTEAU

Populism Ideological Trajectory. The Structural and Ideological Reasons for the Contemporary Rise of the Critic of Elites

Populism is a growing phenomenon. According to Brett Meyer, 17 populist leaders held power in the world in 2021; in 1990, that number was 3.

(See Brett Meyer, “Populists in Power: Perils and Prospects in 2021”, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 18 January 2021: <https://institute.global/policy/populists-power-perils-and-prospects-2021>).

For many and from a democratic point of view, this trend is a serious cause of concerns. Driven by a severe critic of elites and failures of liberal promises, populists tend to share a world view that leaves little room for individual freedom and diversity of opinions. If unchecked, this phenomenon would lead to the imperilment of democracy.

Why is populism growing? Should it be feared? If so, how should it be fought? In this presentation, I will briefly provide an answer to those questions by tracing the ideological trajectory of populism. A series of factors – such as growing economic inequalities; deindustrialization; massive immigration and growing demand for diversity – have contributed and still does to this critic of the liberal order. To efficiently fight the populist world view to which its supporters ascribe, populism should not be the prime target, but the populists’ legitimate grievances that need to be addressed. Only then can we hope to see populism recede.

Mark R. REIFF

Moving beyond the Left-Right Distinction

The rise of Donald Trump and Trumpism, and the rise of similar forms of illiberalism throughout what was thought to be the irrevocably liberal-democratic world, suggests that racism, sexism, xenophobia, religious hatred and paranoia, homophobia, tribalism, a rejection of the rule of law and reason, and an attraction to authoritarianism is endemic in the human psyche, and therefore in human culture. The purpose of this paper is to explain how complacency and a misunderstanding of the precepts of liberalism have allowed its antithesis to rise once again.

Drawing on the work of a great many illiberal thinkers from both the right and the left, most of whom are unknown outside of the already initiated, I shall construct an unconventionally thick description of how the fundamental presuppositions of liberalism and illiberalism differ, a description which enables us to see that the liberal-illiberal axis is as important and multi-faceted as the traditional left-right axis along which political theorists, politicians, and political parties have typically been evaluated. I shall then discuss how the battle between liberalism and illiberalism might be joined, and more importantly, what counts as an argument in this battle and what does not. For one cannot use an argument based on a fundamental presupposition which the other side rejects without begging the question of which set of fundamental presuppositions are correct, something that explains why liberals and their opponents so often find themselves unable to make sense of one another.

Finally, I shall offer some suggestions about how liberals can more effectively respond to the rise of illiberalism in their own communities and in others, explain how we can better organize and prioritize our efforts to keep the ever-present attraction of illiberalism at bay.

Fabien SCHANG

A pragma-semantic approach to the left-right distinction

In his text *Qu'appellez-vous droite et gauche?* (*What do you call right and left*) (1931), the French philosopher Emile-Auguste Charlier, a.k.a. Alain, made the following statement: "When I am asked if the division between parties of the right and of the left, between people of the left or of the right, still has any significance, the first thing that comes to my mind is that whoever asks the question is certainly not from the left." Such a statement seems contradictory, considering that an agent is of the right when he doubts the relevance of the left-right political distinction. Does it follow that anyone who doubts like this is either a liar or the victim of a mistaken belief? While a plausible alternative is to say that any agent who does not consider himself to be on the right or the left is a centrist, there is still some real plausibility in Alain's statement.

The presentation will highlight the *historical* roots of the left-right political distinction, emphasizing its main motivations at the end of the 18th century. Then I will defend the idea that the truth of Alain's declaration rests on a doubly *pragmatic* explanation of the left and the right: (a) at the level of political action: the agents of the left want a change in the social order, not the right-wing agents; (b) at the level of political discourse: the consequence is that anyone who does not declare himself to be on the left *does* nothing to change society and, thus, does the same as those who want to maintain it by doing nothing. This has the effect that not being on the right and being on the right is the same, pragmatically speaking.

The various political self-positions will be reviewed in light of the above explanation, with the objective of defining the usual tendencies: far-left, left, center, right, far-right, plus the additional case of the *extreme center*.

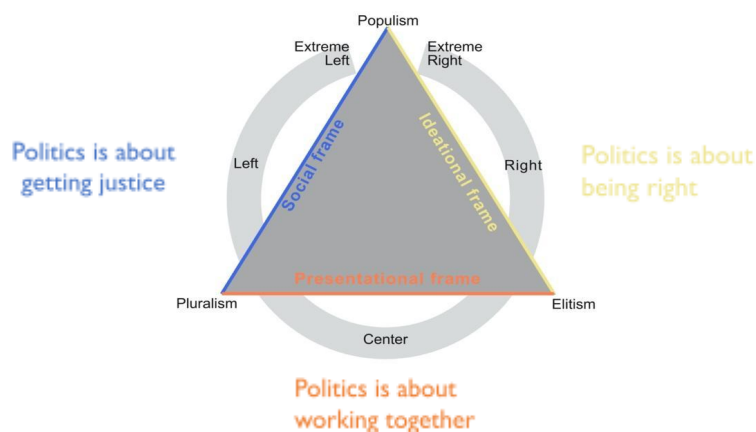
Carola SCHOOR

The left-right spectrum in relation to populism, elitism, and pluralism

In this presentation, I discuss my research into political style and its relation to the left-right political spectrum. Political style can be defined in terms of populism, elitism, and pluralism. Semio-linguistic analysis of these three concepts shows that their meanings are structurally tied to each other. This structure is the basis for a speech analysis model and used for analyses of political speeches in three political contexts the US, the UK, and the Netherlands. From these speech analyses, a pattern emerges that strongly points at a connection between the political concepts of left, right, and middle with the styles of populism, elitism, and pluralism. The pattern suggests that populism is the intersection between left and right; elitism between right and center; pluralism between left and center. The intersections indicate the moments that the dominant frame of looking at politics changes. It entails that left, right and center politics is not so much a matter of political standpoints, but of framing political issues from different dimensions.

This conceptualization of populism in relation to the left-right political spectrum offers an alternative to the so-called horse-shoe model. Whereas the horse-shoe model (correctly) describes the left-right spectrum as a curve in which the extreme left and right approach each other (see Figure 1), the conceptualization of the left-right spectrum as a matter framing offers a sound explanation for the observation that the extreme left and right have more in common with each other than with centrist politics. The explanation is that right-wing politicians mainly regard political issues from the ideational frame, relying on traditional conceptions of reality. In this frame, politics is about the absolute truth that should be followed. Left-oriented politicians regard politics from a social frame: politics is primarily about social justice because what is mainly seen as 'true' in a society, is often advantageous for those in charge because they dominate mainstream narratives. Centrist politicians view politics from a communicative frame; politics is not about being right or getting justice, but about collaboration and communication. As depicted in figure 1, populism combines 'being right' (right politics) and 'getting justice' (left politics). In elitism, 'being right' (right politics) meets 'working together' (center politics). Pluralism combines 'working together' (center politics) with 'getting justice (left politics).' The same political standpoints can be motivated from different frames, which explains why left, right, and center often share views; however, they do not share the ratio behind those standpoints.

Figure 1: The triangular model of populism, elitism and pluralism based on the left-right horseshoe model.





To attend the workshop:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/FafilUFG>

Information:

schangfabien@gmail.com

Presentation video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_wy3AlpWMM&ab_channel=FabienSchang

Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG)
Faculdade de Filosofia (FAFIL)
Av. Esperança, SN, Campus Samambaia - Conj. Itatiaia,
Goiânia - GO, 74690-900
Brazil