ecpr

APPLICATION FORM FOR PROSPECTIVE WORKSHOP DIRECTORS

This form should be used for applications to run a workshop at the Joint Sessions of Workshops. *The deadline for applications is 15 February each year.*

Title of proposed workshop

 "Working with Ideology in a 'Post-Ideological' Age"

Name of workshop director(s):Michael Freeden & Gayil Talshir

(maximum of 2 persons)

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Please note that the information above is VERY important as it will be used in all future correspondence and printed in the academic programme.

The proposal should be typed using 1.5 line spacing on three/four A4 pages using this sheet as the first page, and should cover the points outlined in the guidelines (see over).

Please send this form, together with your **workshop proposal,** to both:

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For further information, please contact either of the above.

Outline of Topic and Relation to Existing Research

It has become something of a commonplace to suggest that we are living in a post-ideological age (Bell 2000, Fukuyama, 1992, Shtromas 1994) in which politics is reduced to a question of government competency; to technocratic management of the valence issues that concern voters in liberal-democratic polities. The organisation of economic growth and the efficient delivery of government services within the context of a market economy become the keystones of political discourse. Political parties agree on the general limits of government activity and compete over their ability to deliver these broadly agreed objectives effectively. We are all liberal democrats now.

Yet, evidence suggests otherwise, and the political environment seems far more complex than this. On the established party-system we are witness to the rise of far right parties, sometimes labelled 'post-fascist' (Griffin, 2000), into government in Austria, The Netherlands and Italy, (along with Jean-Marie Le Pen gaining a place in the second round of the French Presidential elections). On the other hand, the arrival of green parties (to take one example) in government in Germany, France, Sweden and other European states (Műller-Rommel & Poguntke, 2002) signals the emergence of a very different but no less complex set of political beliefs to a position of real influence on public policy. Both contribute to processes of realignment on the Left-Right ideological axis and raise the question whether one ideological spectrum is analytically equipped to address the new alignment of political ideologies.

Furthermore some of the more impressive political developments occurred, during the last three decades, outside of the established party system, in what has been called 'civil society'. The emergence of protest cells, New Social Movements, NGOs and ecological movements, as well as the dominance of 'politics of identity' in post-industrial democracies, all signal new forms of ideological claims. Sections of the populations of western democracies are mobilised around single-issue campaigns concerning the environment, animal rights, rural economies, sub-state nationalism and immigration. These phenomena are likely to be released from the strait-jacket of official, rigid, comprehensive and all-embracing concept of 'ideology' while raising interestingly new manifestations of belief-systems and conceptual frameworks.

On the international arena, the struggle between liberal democracy and religious fundamentalism raise yet another set of ideological questions. At the same time that 'ideology' as an (ideological) description of totalitarian regimes is waning, America is threatening to go to war with Iraq and international political terrorism refuses to fade away.

These circumstances and events hardly seem to exemplify a technocratic, post-ideological form of politics, but reflect instead a more complex, fragmented world of political beliefs than the 'endism' story acknowledges. Endism reflects a view of ideology as a rigid, inflexible, and manipulative set of ideas imposed from the top down and forcing discursive closure on the societies in which they rise to power. Endism is, in other words, intimately related to the association of ideology with totalitarian regimes. Thus, while some theorists maintained their fascination with the endism thesis, political reality suggest a plethora of new – and old – ideological phenomena awaiting for rethinking the empirical and theoretical frameworks of analysis.

Now that the monolithic alternatives to liberal capitalism have declined it seems that students of politics have the opportunity to liberate the concept of ideology from the constraints of association posited in endist literature. If politics has not been reduced to an exercise in technocratic management, as the examples above suggest it is not, then how can we best understand the discursive contestation of political vocabulary taking place in western societies? Is ideology still best employed as a descriptor of a coherent set of beliefs purporting to both explain phenomena in the world and providing putative forms of remedial activity, or is political thought by its nature more fragmented and inchoate than this picture allows? Has the nature of

ideology changed, or did the totalitarian experience misdirect attention to grotesque forms of otherwise ubiquitous phenomena (Freeden, 2000)? How do we both recognise and theorise ideology in this changed world? This question can be addressed under three heads:

1. Ideological analysis of empirical case-studies: what is the political ideology of new collective political actors such as social movements, New Politics parties, Islamic-fundamentalism? What changes can we trace in the ideology of enduring political actors? Can the theoretically informed study of particular parties, social movements, and single-issue campaigns enable us to test the usefulness of our existing conceptions of ideology and move towards improving them?

2. Comparative analysis and methodology: how can we compare political ideologies? What is the methodological tool-kit available for the ideology-analysts? Is there a difference in analysing the ideology of the citizen, the activist, the ideologue and the political leader? How do we study the ideology of movements, as opposed to that of regimes? Can we talk about the ideology of groups which inherently reject their description as ideological? 'Ideology' has generally been taken to be a collective-level phenomenon, associated with the entry of the masses into the political realm, and there has long been a school of ideological inquiry that focuses upon the aggregated political beliefs of individuals (e.g. Lane, 1962, Converse 1964). On the 'endist' conception individuals were seen as manipulable and susceptible to forms of group psychology, likely to be carried away with the masses (apart from liberals, those autonomous human beings subject to enlightened improvement). On one view this work underplayed the roles of agency and intentionality in both ideology formation and social life that have been highlighted in more recent literature (e.g. Tully, 1988; Thompson, 1990; Freeden 1996). However Lacanian analysis of ideology transforms this ordering once again by prioritising the field of social discourse and language over the subject (Stavrakakis, 1999; Žižek, 1989, 1994). This (re)problematises the relationship between individuals and the field of social discourse in which they operate.

3. Theory of ideologies: How do we understand the nature of ideology in the contemporary world? What frameworks of ideological analysis are available today? Should the analysis of ideology be informed by new developments in political theory, such as narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis? Ideology is one of the most used and variously deployed concepts in social science, and recent attempts to rescue the notion from essentialist and value-laden definitions look to conceptual morphology (Freeden, 1994, 1996) and forms of discourse theory (van Dijk, 1998). Are these attempts at developing both theoretically nuanced and analytically operationalisable conceptions of ideology useful in helping us to understand the political ideas currently at work in the world? What theories of ideology are available to the analyst and what insights regarding 'human nature', post-industrial democracies and the 'good society' do they reflect? How can the theory of ideology enrich the discipline of political science?

We appear to be at a turning point in the study of ideology. The old Marxist appropriation of ideology as 'false-consciousness' rings hollow in an age influenced by the scepticism of post-structuralist critiques of realism and attempts at 'semiotic closure'. Endism has heralded the dawn of a post-ideological era not once, but twice in a century and was equally misguided on both occasions. Ideology, it seems, is still with us and attempts to understand it using conceptual morphology, discourse theory, and insights from Lacanian psychoanalysis retain their distinctiveness but appear to be moving toward a mutual conversation where common themes and differences are being explored at both a theoretical and case-study level. A workshop on this topic will facilitate a continued dialogue between these different approaches to understanding ideology, and will allow the theoretical understandings being developed to be confronted with empirical case studies of political beliefs.

Participants

We expect this workshop to be attractive to a wide range of scholars working in the field of ideology theory on the one hand, and/or within particular ideological formations on the other. These would include: Roger Eatwell, Roger Griffin, David Howarth, Ernesto Laclau, Mathew Humphrey, Yannis Stavrakakis, Slavoj Zizek, Marc Stears, Mike Kenny, Lois McNay Liz Frazer, Andrew Vincent, Avner de-Shalit, Teun A. van Dijk

We expect that a workshop of this nature would attract a significant proportion of participants who are not regular ECPR attendees.

Type of Papers: One of the strengths of this workshop is that it offers an opportunity to combine empirical and theoretical work in a coherent fashion. There is considerable empirical work being done on the political beliefs articulated within particular strands of political thought such as nationalism, environmentalism, conservatism etc., as defined by such criteria as pressure group or party membership as well as self-declared ideological allegiance. In order to facilitate its empirical agenda such research frequently takes the nature of 'ideology' as a given independent variable. Theoretical work problematising the concept of ideology inevitably operates at a more abstract level, although given the nature of its subject matter rarely loses touch with empirical questions completely. It does, however, lack the detail of analysis of the ideological case study. This workshop will look for both empirical case studies and more theoretical work in order to foster a dialogue about the nature of ideology today and the future of ideology research.

Funding: There are two potential sources of funding that we will pursue, one is the recently established (Universities of Oxford and Sheffield) Centre for Political Ideologies, which may have some funding available to help support a project such as this (there will be a concomitant demand that the CPI benefits from the resulting research in some way). The other is the UK Arts & Humanities Research Board 'Research Grants Scheme', any application here will require the ECPR workshop to be integrated into a longer-term research project with tangible research output, but this is, anyway, one of our ambitions for this workshop.

Biographical notes. Michael Freeden is Professor of Politics at Oxford University and Professorial Fellow at Mansfield College, Oxford. Among his books are <u>The New Liberalism: An Ideology of Social Reform</u> (Clarendon Press, 1978); <u>Liberalism Divided: A Study in British Political Thought 1914-1939</u> (Clarendon Press, 1986); <u>Reappraising J.A. Hobson</u> (ed.), (Unwin Hyman, 1990); <u>Rights</u> (Open University Press, 1991); <u>Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach</u> (Clarendon Press, 1996); <u>Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent</u> (ed.), (Routledge, 2001). His books have been translated into Italian, Japanese and Romanian. He is the founder-editor of the <u>Journal of Political Ideologies</u>, and the director of the Centre for Political Ideologies at Oxford University.

Gayil Talshir is Lecturer of Politics in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the head of the MA Programme in Democracy and Citizenship. Her book, 'The Political Ideology of Green Parties: from Politics of Nature to Redefining the Nature of Politics' was published by Palgrave, 2002.

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