



Exploring the Discipline of IR Beyond the Mind

Kiel University Research Group on International Political Sociology (KUIPS),

September 13 -14 2013

Moving beyond the outworn dichotomies such as positivism versus post-positivism by means of addressing philosophical perspectives, a reframed picture of IR metatheory emerges. Most usefully, it can be thought of as a three-level game between the philosophical discourse, the scientific discourse, and the discourse of IR's range of subject matter. On the first, the central dividing line appears between a tradition of philosophy-as-epistemology and a tradition of philosophy-beyond-the-mind. Focusing on the latter, it raises the question of philosophy's status as a modern discipline over science or culture in general, and reverberates on the level of science. Beyond this broad common ground, resting on a rejection of Cartesian-based univocal conceptions of being, there remain distinct differences within perspectives departing from an "oxymoronically post-philosophical philosophy" (R. Rorty).

Schedule

Thursday, September 12

Arrival and check-in at the hotel

Hotel Birke,
Martenshofweg 2-8, 24109 Kiel.
<http://www.hotel-birke.de/kiel/en>

Friday, September 13

9.00 – 9.30 **Welcome address and introduction**
Dirk Nabers, Ryoma Sakaeda

9.30 – 12.30 **Session 1**

On the Conduct and Purposes of Enquiry in IR

Richard Shapcott

Explanation, Understanding & Critical IR

Annick T.R. Wibben

"Always Already There"? Resisting Genetic Amnesia in International Theory

Benjamin Herborth

12.30 – 14.00 **Lunch at Hotel Birke**

14.00 – 17.00 **Session 2**

Debating the Materiality of Discourse: Discourse Theory Under Attack, the Psychoanalytic Orientation and the European Crisis

Yannis Stavrakakis

Discourse and the Turn to Matter: From the Body to the Economy

Jason Glynos

On Disarticulation or What It Means To Be a Discursive Element

Urs Stäheli

17.00 – 17.30 **Summary (Dirk Nabers, Ryoma Sakaeda)**

18.30 **Meeting at the hotel lobby, dinner at a seaside restaurant**

Saturday, September 14

Session 3	
9.00 – 12.00	<p><i>Crisis and Change</i> Dirk Nabers</p> <p><i>Situating Indigenous Conceptions of Power and Governance in IR</i> David MacDonald</p> <p><i>How to Think (In)Securitisation Practices through International Political Sociology?</i> Didier Bigo</p>
12.00 – 12.30	Final Discussion
12.30 – 14.00	Lunch at Hotel Birke
14.00	Departure

Abstracts

On the Conduct and Purposes of Enquiry in IR

Richard Shapcott, University of Queensland

This paper will seek to demonstrate why and how PT Jackson's commitment to the fact value distinction employed by Weber undermines his ability to deal successfully with the challenge of reflexivity and with his project of a pluralist social sciences of IR. It argues that Jackson's reading of reflexivity in critical theory is not that different from that offered by mainstream IR theorists such as Keohane and Mearsheimer. The paper will draw upon the work of GH Gadamer, J Habermas and Andrew Sayer and others to both challenge the fact value distinction and to spell out what a successful challenge might mean for the task of the social sciences.

Explanation, Understanding & Critical IR

Annick T.R. Wibben, University of San Francisco

This paper aims to explore modern science in relation to the discipline of IR by revisiting a key work in the post/positivism debate of the 1990s – Hollis & Smith's *Explaining and Understanding International Relations* (1991). Hollis and Smith, while pushing the boundaries of IR at the moment by taking seriously issues in the philosophy of science, do a disservice to critical theory in IR. By suggesting that explaining and understanding are entirely different ways of striving for knowledge, thus replicating the *Methodenstreit* of Max Weber and his contemporaries for the discipline of IR, their work limits the terms of the debate about critical approaches within IR. To make this argument – and to suggest how the situation might be remedied – the paper draws on Robert Cox's distinction between critical and problem-solving theory as well as on Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, which maintains that understanding envelops explanation.

"Always Already There"? Resisting Genetic Amnesia in International Theory

Benjamin Herborth, University of Groningen

In International Relations (IR) research practice, the foundational traditions based on Cartesian and Kantian principles affect a general epistemic perspective, from which the realms of political sovereignty and authority are virtually taken as theoretical starting points as opposed to a perspective that theorizes the historical emergence and transformations of these realms. As this form of “genetic amnesia” is characteristic for large parts of social and political theory rather than being peculiar to the field of IR, criticism generated from within the latter discipline would always amount to more than issues concerning the application of theory to empirical questions and research. Instead, it inevitable leads to a critical perspective of social theory, which attempts to rethink the nexus between politics and world society. This paper explores these consequences in terms of a conceptual tension between “the political” and “the social” as corresponding to the question of how to conceptualize the relationship between “international politics” and “world society”.

Crisis & Change

Dirk Nabers, Kiel University

Two terms – crisis and change – define the more general starting point of the following inquiry. They will be qualified further on, as other terms exist which seem more appropriate to denote the mutual constitution of the social and the political. Hoping to find some preliminary answers to the above posed questions, I will spend some time in the next section deliberating how crisis has traditionally been conceptualized in the discipline of International Relations (IR). I will contend that the bulk of the traditional IR crisis literature is strictly materialist and objectivist and highlights decision-making at the expense of more structural accounts of the nature of crisis. To remedy this conspicuous shortcoming, subsequent sections will deal with the notions of ‘reality’, ‘difference’ and ‘dislocation’. The article closes with some discourse theoretical remarks on the nexus between crisis and social change. These remarks are designed to open up avenues for further research in IR.

Debating the Materiality of Discourse: Discourse Theory Under Attack, the Psychoanalytic Orientation and the European Crisis

Yannis Stavrakakis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki

Within the framework of recurring epistemological and theoretical discussions regarding the relation between ideas/materiality, mind/body, discourse/matter, this paper will focus on the various criticisms directed against the so-called Essex School of discourse theory emanating from traditional materialist, 'post-hegemonic' and 'new materialist' standpoints. In particular, it will try to chart an orientation that draws on psychoanalytic theory (especially on the distinctions between real and reality, the theorisations of the materiality of the signifier and the relation between discourse and affect-jouissance) in order to arrive at an operational theorisation of discursive practices able to produce innovative understandings of international politics, including the current European crisis.

Discourse and the Turn to Matter: From the Body to the Economy

Jason Glynos, University of Essex

It has become commonplace to say that language and meaning play a central role in our understanding of human practices. More recently, however, it has been claimed that 'foregrounding material factors and reconfiguring our very understanding of matter are prerequisites for any plausible account of coexistence and its conditions in the twenty-first century' (Coole/Frost 2010). Such a 'materialist turn' is seen as an urgent response to new developments in natural science and ecological thinking, the proliferation of bio-political, bio-ethical and technological issues, and the renewed centrality accorded to matters of political economy. But this materialist turn is complicated by the fact that it takes place in the wake of the linguistic turn. This generates a question about how one can use the resources of discourse theory to acknowledge and conceptualize this material quality in a productive way, without abandoning the insights we rightly associate with the linguistic turn. A prominent psychoanalytic strand informing discourse theory offers one way to approach this question. I draw on this strand in this paper, focusing on the category of fantasy, situating it in relation to a broader poststructuralist ontology of discourse. Through a combination of theoretical reflection and case illustrations, I plan to engage critically with several attempts to promote or respond to the materialist turn in a number of domains, including the domain of political economy.

On Disarticulation or What It Means To Be a Discursive Element

Urs Stäheli, University of Hamburg

Recent discussions of New Materialism (ranging from affect theories, media archaeology, post-hegemony to speculative realism) have challenged our understanding of social and cultural representations. Notably, poststructuralist hegemony theory (Laclau/Mouffe) is challenged by this new critique of representation. Although some representatives of the 'materialist turn' seem to call for abandoning discourse analysis, this paper asks how a 'materialist' discourse analysis might become possible. For doing this, I will argue that discourse analysis has to re-learn its materialist legacy, notably by emphasizing the mediality of discursive processes.

How to Think (In)Securitisation Practices Through International Political Sociology?

Didier Bigo, Sciences-Po, Paris, King's College, London

The first part of this paper analyses what could be an approach in terms of International Political Sociology inspired by a relational and processual methodology insisting on questioning the assumptions of IR concerning the boundaries of the international, the vision of politics at the core of political sciences, and the methodological nationalism concerning society of a majority of sociologists. IPS proposes a series of different alternatives (sometimes non compatible) as a way to think the international of diverse "plural" universes, different social worlds, either bounded territorially or professionally, whose networks are quite always transnational in their scope. The aim is to decolonise the study of practices of the "transnational societies of individuals" from a specific disciplinary approach. In order to avoid a long series of dualism (agency structure, state society, public private), which survive through the division between academic knowledge, IPS discusses the different episteme at work and analyses the socio genesis of the practices of actors in their different professional and cultural universes. IPS looks specifically to their struggles for power and is centrally interested into the processes of politicisation and (in)securitisation. IPS is therefore constructivist in the sense that its authors are reflexive and deconstruct essentialist claims to knowledge. IPS is empiricist inasmuch as the

authors are sensitive to the practices of human beings and their relationships to objects and start their theories from these sociological and historical relationships always embedded in specific locations and time, rather than by applying abstract categories to so-called 'case studies'. Of course empiricism does not mean positivism, and constructivism does not mean an idealistic perspective where norms, ideas and beliefs lead the world. The second part of the paper will show how from a study of the contemporary practices labelled security and considered as global and preventative, it is not possible to continue with the analyses of IR security studies, including the "critical" ones, and it is central to analyse how different forms of knowledge coming from IT but also criminology, geography, management have been assembled by the actors in a practical regime of justification. It will look at the notion of (in)securitisation process and at its socio genesis. It will finally describe how the dynamics of an icy overflow of (in)security processes is modifying the different professional worlds (military, police, customs but also private firms, insurances, computer science, health) and is reconfiguring the relation between security seen as global and preventative and freedom, mobility, and social protection.
