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Direct Engagement or Discursive Impact?

Public Philosophy in the United Kingdom and Germany

1 Introduction

Although it focuses on the governing of human communities, the origins of legitimacy and authority, the nature of justice and other questions regarding the basic institutions within which human beings live together, the relationship between political philosophy and 'real' politics has always been fraught. On one hand, in light of its status as a *Wissenschaft*, many modern political theorists follow Max Weber in arguing that "scientifically pleading for practical and interested stands [...] is meaningless in principle because the various value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other."[1] On this reading, while political philosophy may develop tools that "enable us to see what to do," such engagement is not necessary as practical interventions "are not precipitates of a theory."[2]

On the other hand, since it is usually classified a subfield of practical and not theoretical philosophy, it seems natural to think that political theory should be able to provide concrete guidance, just as ethics and moral philosophy are expected to furnish theoretical tools that are applicable to everyday life. For proponents of this view, "political philosophers have a responsibility to take matters of public policy seriously, and [...] to make a contribution where we can." Self-styled 'realists' and their fellow travelers within the discipline therefore reject the qui-

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1 Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. by Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills, transl. by Hans Heinrich Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 129–157, here p. 147. While some distinguish between the terms political theorist and political philosopher, I will use them as synonyms for the purposes of this argument.

2 David Schmidtz, *The Elements of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 27.

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etist stance of Weber, arguing that political theory should be "effective source of orientation or a guide to action."[3]

As a result of the so-called "applied turn" there is a growing consensus that philosophers should "have socio-political ambitions for their work." However, there is no discernable consensus on how to balance "truth seeking and democratic responsiveness" in doing so.[4] On the contrary, this issue has led to a number of high-profile polemics and disputes. Rather than focusing on the debates themselves, which I addressed elsewhere, I will instead focus on how these disagreements play themselves out different national contexts due to a whole host of historical, cultural, social and political variables.[5]

Undoubtedly one of the most important is the approach to philosophy that is most prevalent within the educational system of the state in question. Generally speaking, in places dominated by the analytic approach, which "stresses the virtues of conceptual and normative clarity," the philosopher is more likely to engage in politics directly, since this tradition fosters the belief that she "is specially equipped to help her fellow citizens make their political choices."[6] Whereas this approach is particularly prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon world, the rest of Europe is dominated by so-called continental philosophy. While this geographic marker is not always helpful, political theorists working within this more literary, contextual philosophical form focus on "practices of political reasoning as embedded in broader social, economic and cultural structures."[7] As a result, they also tend favor more indirect, critical forms of engagement with government and administrative structures that focuses on debates within the broader public sphere.

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3 Jonathan Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy: A Philosophical Inquiry* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 1; Raymond Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 98.

4 Liam Bright, "The End of Analytic Philosophy," *The Sooty Empiric* (23 May 2021); Alice Baderin, "Political Theory and Public Opinion: Against Democratic Restraint," *Politics, Philosophy & Economics* 15: 3 (2016): 209–233, here: 209.

5 See Peter J. Verovšek, "The Philosopher as Engaged Citizen: Habermas on the Role of the Public Intellectual in the Modern Democratic Public Sphere," *European Journal of Social Theory* (2021), https://doi.org/10.1177/13684310211003192; Peter J. Verovšek, "Impure Theorizing in an Imperfect World: Politics, Utopophobia and Critical Theory in Geuss's Realism," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 45:3 (2019), pp. 265–283.

6 David Owen, "Reasons and Practices of Reasoning: On the analytic/Continental Distinction in Political Philosophy," *European Journal of Political Theory* 15:2 (2016): 127–188, here: 174; Adam Swift and Stuart White, "Political Theory, Social Science, and Real Politics," in *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches*, ed. by David Leopold and Marc Stears (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 49–69, here p. 49.

7 Owen, "Reasons and Practices of Reasoning," p. 179.

In order to examine how these differences play out in practice as well as their implications for the broader political culture, my argument focuses on the dominant modes of public philosophy in the United Kingdom (UK) and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). I start by briefly examining the deep historical roots of these differences (I), before turning to how they play out in practice in both of these national contexts. In examining how the analytic approach in Britain fosters direct engagement with politicians and the policy process more generally, I highlight what this means for the relationship between politics and the university system, focusing in particular on the outsized role played by the Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) degree at Oxford University (II).

Turning my attention to the FRG, I illustrate how continental philosophers in Germany are more inclined to apply their theoretical insights indirectly, seeking to influence broader societal discourses as public intellectuals (III). I then come to my basic thesis. I argue that the continental approach of contributing to debates in the public sphere is more respectful of democratic norms and the ideal of popular participation, since it does not seek to gain influence behind closed doors through "privilege connected to public service," but instead respects the equality of all citizens as potential participants in public discourse (IV).[8] This mediated, indirect form of public philosophy has the added advantage of allowing political theorists to apply their knowledge within the public square without undermining their status as academic philosophers, whose research is oriented towards truth.

2 Political Engagement and the Analytic-Continental Divide

While today it is somewhat unusual for a philosopher to abandon the Ivory Tower and enter into the political fray, this was not the case for most of the history of political thought. On the contrary, few of the major thinkers in the canon before the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century "was a cloistered scholar or university professor detached from the real world of politics."[9] While none attempted to rule as Socratic philosopher-kings, most were directly engaged in the politics

8 William Davies quoted in Andy Beckett, "PPE: The Oxford Degree that Runs Britain," *The Guardian*, sec. Education, 23 Feb, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/feb/23/ppe-oxford-university-degree-that-rules-britain, accessed 10 February 2021.

9 Steven B. Smith, *Political Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 7.

of their time as councilors or administrators. For example, Plato made at least three trips to Sicily to advise the tyrants of Syracuse and Aristotle was the teacher of Alexander the Great, a role similar to that of Thomas Hobbes, who served as a tutor to the exiled royal court during the English Civil War. By contrast, Niccolò Machiavelli spent many years in the Florentine foreign service and as an adviser to the ruling Medici family, while John Stuart Mill spent his career as a colonial administrator for the semi-sovereign East India Company, who was for a time responsible for its relations with the princely states. Jean-Jacques Rousseau took a somewhat more direct, but relatively non-political role in writing constitutions for Poland and Corsica, while Alexis de Tocqueville and Edmund Burke actually served as legislative representatives in the French National Assembly and British Parliament, respectively.

However, over the course of the nineteenth century political thinkers moved away from this traditional desire to "influence public policy more directly by acting as advisers to governments."[10] In large part this is due to the development of scientific research over the course of the Enlightenment. To start, the creation of the modern university allowed individuals interested in the *Wissenschaften* – the sciences broadly conceived – to pursue what previously would have been a mere avocation as a paid profession that was increasingly "organized in special[ized] disciplines in the service of self-clarification and knowledge of interrelated facts."[11] Unlike most of the thinkers in the canon, who had engaged in political theory as a hobby alongside their regular work, these newly professionalized academics were able to earn a living by pursuing the "internal presuppositions" of their research based on "the rules of logic and method" where "what is yielded by scientific work is important in the sense that it is 'worth being known.'"[12] This development not only allowed modern political philosophers to retreat from actual politics; it also allowed them to ignore questions of 'real' politics entirely if they wished.

Of course, not all political theorists chose to retreat from politics. However, their relatively secure positions with the burgeoning university systems that began to consolidate themselves across Europe pushed them to find ways of doing so on a part time or case-to-case basis. It is at this point that important differences between countries began to emerge. While numerous factors at both the personal, social and political levels affect the relationship between political phi-

10 Helen Small, "Introduction," in *The Public Intellectual*, ed. by Helen Small (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002),pp. 1–18, here p. 4.

11 Weber, *Science as a Vocation*, p. 152.

12 Weber, *Science as a Vocation*, p. 143.

losophy and politics, how theorists approach and think about their work is undoubtedly one of the most important, as some forms of scholarship are more easily translated into public policy than others.

While it is possible to distinguish between many different forms of political theory, the most common and most relevant for my purposes is the broader bifurcation of the discipline between practitioners of analytic and continental philosophy. Although this distinction was only institutionalized during the postwar period after 1945, the depth of this methodological gulf led Richard Rorty to predict that there will soon come a time when "it may seem merely a quaint historical accident that both [traditions] bear the same name."[13] Since my goal here is to examine how these different traditions approach the relationship of theory and practice in general – and the engagement of political philosophy with politics more specifically – my discussion will necessarily be schematic.

At the most general and basic level, analytic and continental philosophy differ in both the questions they ask and how they seek to answer them. I will turn my attention first to the former. As the label already suggests, the analytic approach identified with the rigor and precision of the scientific method. On this understanding "the goal of philosophy is the analysis of the structure of thought" and "that the only proper method for analysing thought consists in the analysis of language." According to Michael Dummett, this means that it pursues "a systematic theory of meaning" based on "an explicit statement of those principles an implicit grasp of which constitutes [...] mastery of the language."[14]

These two basic tenets of analytic philosophy explain many of its key characteristics, including its careful, scientific style of writing, emphasis on theoretical precision, desire to proceed logically based on fundamental principles, relative lack of interest in the history of philosophy and commitment in bringing implicit intuitions to the surface as clearly and explicitly as possible. In this sense, "[a]nalytic philosophy has long had ambitions to something like scientific status." With its readily applicable conceptual tools, it stands alongside the other disciplines, supporting them with its expertise in clarification and logical rigor. Peter Strawson thus compares this "species of philosophy" to the analysis of grammar: "just as the [...] modern grammarian labours to produce a systematic account of the structure of rules which we effortlessly observe in speaking grammatically, so the philosopher labours to produce a systematic account of the gen-

13 Richard Rorty, *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 23.

14 Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978), pp. 458, 451.

eral conceptual structure of which our daily practice shows us to have a tacit and unconscious mastery."[15]

By contrast, while continental philosophy is also interested in language and the way it shapes the human experience of the world and our interactions within it, it does not seek to uncover existing intuitions or unconscious knowledge. Far from assuming that human being merely need to systematize what they already implicitly comprehend, continental theory instead examines how language, practices and everyday understandings of the world reveal deep, fundamental philosophical problems. As a result, the themes "of cultural critique, concern with the background conditions of enquiry, and (to cite the sub-title of a recent book) 'the fall of the self' [...] run through the writings of the most influential continental thinkers."[16] Given that this approach is closer to the humanities than to the natural sciences, continental philosophy does not produce clear answers to precise questions; instead, it problematizes existing ideas and generates new (presumably more illuminating) ways of conceptualizing problems.

Additionally, and in distinct contrast to analytic philosophy, which like physics displays little interest in its own history, Kevin Mulligan notes, "[h]istory looms large in Continental Philosophy."[17] In fact, for many of its practitioners, there is no distinction between philosophy and the history of philosophy, since arguments are developed "textually and contextually" in dialogue with previous thinkers. Given its interest in cultural critique and the epistemological problems that accompany the attempt to gain knowledge of the self and the external world, continental philosophers reject analytic pretentions of rigor based on "argument, distinctions, and [...] moderately plain speech."[18] Instead, given its methodological commitments to history, it holds that "philosophical problems do not fall from the sky ready-made and cannot be treated as elements in some ahistorical fantasy of *philosophia perennis*."[19]

The distinction between analytic and continental philosophy can perhaps best be understood by their respective orientations to different "structural problematics." While analytic thinkers are driven by what David Owen calls the "guid-

15 Bright, *The End of Analytic Philosophy*; P. F. Strawson, *Analysis and Metaphysics: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 2, 7.

16 David E. Cooper, "The Presidential Address: Analytical and Continental Philosophy," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 94 (1994): 1–18, here: 4.

17 Kevin Mulligan, "Introduction: On the History of Continental Philosophy," *Topoi* 10:2 (1991), 115–120, here: 116.

18 Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* (London: Fontana, 1985), p. vi.

19 Simon Critchley, "What is Continental Philosophy?," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 5: 3 (10/01, 1997): 347–363, here: 353f.

ance problem," continental theorists are motivated by critique. This has important implications for how they relate to and engage with politics:

> whereas 'analytic' political philosophy is focussed on generating reasons that are oriented to the issue of articulating norms of justice, legitimacy etc. that guide political judgements about institutions and/or forms of conduct; 'Continental' political philosophy is oriented to critically assessing the practices of reasoning that characterise our social and political institutions and forms of conduct as well as our first-order normative reflection on them.[20]

These basic methodological differences shape not only how political philosophers think about what they can bring to public policy and broader debates, but also how they go about doing so. On the one hand, the analytically inclined tend to favor direct engagement with politics since they proceed from the assumption that political philosophy "is made for the analysis of public policy, exploring foundational values, and consolidating them into theories and prototype policies that could, with reasonable adjustment, fit practical needs to improve [...] our public lives."[21] They are therefore more likely to intervene directly "as advisers to governments and members of think tanks, government commissions, and policy committees," that provide public policy recommendations to elected officials.[22] In these kinds of capacity, they are able to assist in the policy-making process in an unmediated manner by putting their philosophical tools to use in order to make arguments "and distinctions, and detect ambiguity or confusion, and reflect on the logical relations between ideas, and so on."[23]

By contrast, continental political theorists favor a more indirect, critical engagement with social and political life because "they are more interested in the political stakes and conditions of knowledge, and thus in laying bare the nonrational factors that condition knowledge."[24] Insofar as they do choose to enter into public debate, they tend to so from the outside by taking on the role of the public intellectual. In this way they follow in the footsteps of Immanuel Kant, who saw it as his duty (*Pflicht*) "*as a man of learning* addressing the entire *reading public*"

20 Owen, "Reasons and Practices of Reasoning," p. 173.

21 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, pp. 2f.

22 Small, "Introduction," p. 4.

23 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 8.

24 Neil Levy, "Analytic and Continental Philosophy: Explaining the Differences," *Metaphilosophy* 34:3 (2003), p. 288.

to "use his own reason and speak in his own person" in order to "publicly voices his thoughts on the impropriety or even injustice" of public policy.[25]

These differences play themselves out very clearly in the way that political philosophers engage with politics in the UK and FRG. Within the UK, philosophy usually engages with public affairs directly from within governmental institution. The association of Britain with the analytic tradition is not surprising given that the term analytic is often taken to "be entirely synonymous with 'Anglo-American.'"[26] By contrast, given that "[t]aking German idealism seriously [...] is one of the marks of Continental Philosophy," it is similarly unsurprising that continental political theorists in the FRG tend to engage in politics indirectly as public intellectuals seeking to influence public debate from the outside.[27]

I examine how these differences play out in the next two sections. I turn first to the UK, where the dominant analytic approach and elite, centralized educational system encourages political philosophers to participate in politics directly. As an example of how this works in practice, I focus on the Oxford PPE degree, which plays an outsized role in funneling individuals into government and the civil service, while also offering their university-based tutors the opportunity to have a political impact through their former students. I then examine the situation in the FRG, focusing on its most prominent postwar philosopher and public intellectual, Jürgen Habermas, who has emerged as the "teacher of Germany" (*Praeceptor Germaniae*) and "the conscience of society," at least in the west.[28]

3 The UK: Direct Philosophical Participation in Politics

As I already noted above, the analytic approach dominates philosophy departments in the UK (continental philosophers working in the UK tend to be housed in other disciplines, including literature, sociology and politics). In the words of John Dunn – and echoing the point I made above – this plays an important role in structuring public philosophy in Britain, since its practitioners are inclined to

25 Immanuel Kant, "An Answer to the Question: 'What is Enlightenment?,'" in *Kant's Political Writings*, ed. by H. S. Reiss, second enlarged edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 55, 57, 56.

26 Levy, *Analytic and Continental Philosophy*, p. 286.

27 Mulligan, "Introduction," p. 117.

28 *Die Welt*, 13 October 2001; Václav Havel, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," *New York Review of Books* (22 June 1995).

believe that the "purpose of political theory is to diagnose practical predicaments and to show us how best to confront them."[29] Moreover, given their training in the abstract analysis of problems, they argue that their tool are applicable to a broad range of issues, including public safety, health care, sustainability, crimes, etc., without the need to specialized knowledge of any of these fields. In this sense, their education and methodology both predispose them to believe – "rather pompously," Jo Wolff admits – "that philosophers should have something to contribute to all of these policy areas."[30]

Despite their lack of specialized knowledge in any of these fields, analytic public philosophers argue that they have much to offer public policy debates due to their readily translatable skills: "We know about patterns of argument, with standard objections, and thoughtful replies. [...] We know how to depersonalize arguments and consider them on their merits."[31] This commitment to direct engagement with government and belief that they have something constructive to offer does not, however, mean that analytic philosophers working in the UK all agree on how to go about translating theory into practice. On the contrary, there is much debate within analytic philosophy about how they should approach the policy process and what role they should play.

Wolff divides analytic public philosophy into two basic forms: applied and engaged. In the former, one "start[s] with a reasonably well-worked out philosophical theory which one then applies to the world rather in the way you might simplistically imagine that a scientific theory is applied."[32] This is in line with the basic impulses of the analytic approach, in which the goal "is to try to work out which position in the debate is correct, by considering arguments, counterexamples and anything else that might usefully come to hand." However, it also raises a number of problems. The first is that the applied public philosopher can say little to someone who does not share the same theory (utilitarianism, for example). As a result, this commitment to analytical rigor can quickly come to seem like dogmatism.

This applied approach is also potentially dangerous, since the real-world implications of philosophical theories as they relate to other areas of life or other policies, are often not well worked out or plausible. As a result, Wolff councils against this form of public philosophy, noting the importance of compromise and

29 John Dunn, *Interpreting Political Responsibility: Essays 1981–1989* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 193.

30 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 1.

31 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 201.

32 Yiannis Kouris and Jonathan Wolff, "Philosophy & Public Policy," *Institute for Alternative Politics Blog* (24 April 2021).

of working within the confines of existing policy. Instead of searching for the right answer – as the analytic philosopher is wont to do – he argues that "what matters in public policy debate is not convincing yourself that you have the best position, but carrying others with you [...] working out how people can get much of what they want without taking too much away from others."[33]

Wolff therefore advises public philosophers to adopt the engaged rather than the applied approach. Rather than starting at the abstract level and treating policy recommendations as answers to perennial problems, engaged political theory instead seeks "to justify change from the status quo, rather than exploring different positions in a vacuum." While this more modest form does not allow the philosopher to insert preexisting theoretical considerations straight to public policy, Wolff argues that in this way "we [analytic philosophers] will at least enrich the public debate, even if we don't have an answer for everything."[34]

Wolff's distinction between applied and engaged public philosophy emerge directly from his own experience participating in the public policy process, not from philosophical reflection on the proper relationship between theory and practice. However, it also speaks to a number of increasingly rancorous debates within the discipline. Perhaps the most strident position is that of a group of self-styled "realists," who have called on political philosophy to abandon its "high liberalism," represented by its focus on issues of basic rights and the creation of a just society, in favor of an approach that is directly "connected to practical interventions."[35]

Unfortunately, despite its focus on connecting political theory to public policy, Raymond Geuss is representative of many other prominent realists insofar as he has "devoted much more space to his critique of mainstream political theory than to the formulation of his alternative approach." Since they have focused their energies on their *Methodenstreit* with liberalism, which does not seek to connect philosophy to politics but instead seeks to generate ideal theories of a just world, the basic problem with political realism is that examples of realists actually doing realist theory are relatively scarce.[36] Unlike Wolff, whose ideas come from his own real-world experiences, realism represents an internal theoretical polemic against the discipline rather than a new approach to public philosophy.

33 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 203.

34 Kouris and Wolff, "Philosophy & Public Policy".

35 Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, p. 98.

36 Enzo Rossi, "Can Realism Move Beyond a *Methodenstreit*?," *Political Theory* 44:3 (2016): 410–420, here: 410; Enzo Rossi, "Reality and Imagination in Political Theory and Practice: On Raymond Geuss's realism," *European Journal of Political Theory* 9:4 (2010): 504–512, here: 505.

A second, more moderate alternative has also emerged from within what realists refer to as 'mainstream liberalism.' Known as democratic underlabouring, this model seeks to direct "attention towards evidence about the forms in which, and conditions under which, the arguments of political theory are comprehensible to a wider public."[37] Following this approach, which blends aspects of both Wolff's applied and engaged forms of public philosophy, the theorist is called to take on the "limited and modest" role as the philosopher, who contributes to the policy process by not only examining the implications of existing proposals and by "offer[ing] arguments and justifications of her own."[38] Democratic underlabouring thus gives the political theorist a "specific place in the political and policymaking process," both in understanding the problem at hand and in offering solutions to it.[39] While supporters of this form of public philosophy argue that decisions must ultimately be left up to voters and their duly elected representatives, they believe that political theory "can facilitate better, more effective political action" by offering "orienting action-guidance."[40]

These analytic ideals for how political theory can contribute to 'real' politics influence how public philosophy functions in the UK. More specifically, the link between academic philosophy and public policy in Britain is to a large extent defined by the highly centralized nature of higher education in the UK. While it is common to speak of Oxbridge – i. e., both Oxford and Cambridge – as the stepping stones to the upper strata of British society and politics, as John Campbell notes, "Whatever the competing academic claims of Cambridge, it is overwhelmingly from Oxford that the governing elite has reproduced itself, generation after generation." More specifically, since its foundation in 1920, the Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) there has emerged as "the course of choice for aspiring politicians."[41]

It originally emerged in response to student demand for "a modernside Greats, based on Philosophy" that would serve as a counterpart to the 'Greats' (or *literae humaniores*) degree, which combined classical languages and ancient his-

37 Baderin, "Political Theory and Public Opinion," p. 225.

38 Swift and White, "Political Theory," pp. 49, 54.

39 Swift and White, "Political Theory," p. 49.

40 Benjamin L. McKean, "What Makes a Utopia Inconvenient? On the Advantages and Disadvantages of a Realist Orientation to Politics," *American Political Science Review* 110:4 (2016): 876–888, here: 881; Luke Ulaş, "Can Political Realism be Action-Guiding?" (6 January 2020).

41 John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins: A Well-Rounded Life* (New York: Random House, 2014), ch. 2, first page; ch. 1, last page.

tory with philosophy.[42] However, PPE soon abandoned these humanist, historical aspirations, as the components of abstract analytic philosophy and highly technical mathematized neo-classical economics took center stage (for example, the language requirement was abandoned in 1937). This was largely due to the influence of one of its leading early tutors, Benjamin Jowett, who not only wanted to transform Balliol College into a place that linked university education to public service, but who also admittedly aspired "to govern the world" through his former students.[43] The aim of PPE soon explicitly became to train students to enter into "business, the Civil Service or public life."[44]

While these lofty goals may have seemed unrealistic at the time, they have largely been achieved. While a recent report commissioned by Oxford celebrating the centenary of PPE reflects on "the surprising number of PPEists, who have become government minsters or even Prime Minister" in the UK, it does not provide a full list.[45] However, some recent names include, Tony Benn, Tony Crosland, Peter Mandelson, David Cameron and Ed Balls. According to Nick Cohen, "There are more PPE graduates in the [House of] Commons than Old Etonians (35 to 20). Remember I am not talking about Oxbridge-educated politicians, who make up 50 per cent of ministers and 28 per cent of MPs, but the graduates of just one Oxford course."[46]

The close connection between PPE and parliament in Westminster has important implications for how philosophers associated with this degree are able to influence public life. The fact that so many of their students hold roles in public life, either as politicians or within the civil service, means that they are able to exert influence as public philosophers directly. This occurs both formally, as PPE dons are often the first people asked to sit on government commissions and advisory panels, and informally, as many PPEists turn to their erstwhile tutors for conversation and advice. In a sign of how well Jowett's aspirations of ruling

42 See Robert Currie, "The Arts and Social Studies, 1914–1939," in *The History of the University of Oxford: Volume VIII: The Twentieth Century*, ed. by Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 109–138, here p. 112.

43 Benjamin Jowett, letter to Florence Nightingale, 4 December 1873, in J. M. Prest and Vincent Quinn, *Dear Miss Nightingale: A Selection of Benjamin Jowett's Letters to Florence Nightingale, 1860–1893* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897), p. 249.

44 See Currie, "The Arts and Social Studies, 1914–1939," p. 116.

45 Bethany White, Samuel Wainwright and Lilly Schreiter, *One Hundred Years of PPE, 1920–2020* (Oxford: University of Oxford, [2020]), https://www.humanities.ox.ac.uk/files/ppe100 years reportpdf, accessed 20 April 2021, p. 1.

46 Nick Cohen, "How an Oxford Degree – PPE – Created a Robotic Governing Class," *The Spectator,* 27 September 2014, https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/how-an-oxford-degree-ppe-created-a-robotic-governing-class, accessed 20 April 2021.

through his students has turned out, Roy Jenkins points out that over the course of the twentieth century many "Balliol tutors enjoyed advertising their power" by arranging for their "tutorials to be interrupted by telephone calls from the famous."[47]

In light of these considerations, the Labour peer Maurice Glasman concludes that "PPE combines the status of an elite university degree – PPE is the ultimate form of being good at school – with the stamp of a vocational course. It is perfect training for cabinet membership."[48] Unfortunately, this way of thinking about the relationship between theory and practice is more likely to lead the philosophers associated with this degree to adopt an applied, rather than an engaged form of public philosophy.

As a result of their desire to insert preexisting theoretical considerations straight to public policy, philosophers associated with PPE – as well as their erstwhile students active in public life – tend to practice a form of applied public philosophy. For example, instead of leading the careful consideration of the concrete issues at hand, debate about the implications of change and the desire to build consensus about what should be done, the mindset of "Oxford PPE reduces everything in politics to a technical question: what's the right policy?" Glasman, who continued concludes that the basic problem is that "PPEists don't do conflict." Rather than engaging in debate and seeking "to draw more people into a consensus view, so that policy can be more widely endorsed," this mentality encourages its adherents to "to 'fool themselves' and spread bad ideas with lots of confidence and bluffing."[49] Instead of engaging with experts, who can bring specialized knowledge to bear on the matter at hand, they are encouraged to impose their own preexisting ideas, even if they are inappropriate or even dangerous.

Obviously, PPE cannot be taken to represent all public philosophy in the UK. However, it is clear the highly centralized, elitist educational and political systems in Britain, which are closely tied together, encourages "political theorists need to be genuine participants in public debate" *qua* theorists.[50] Moreover, the dominance of analytic philosophy in Britain means that these individuals are

47 Roy Jenkins quoted in Beckett, "PPE: The Oxford Degree that Runs Britain".

48 Maurice Glasman quoted in Beckett, "PPE: The Oxford Degree that Runs Britain".

49 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 5; Dominic Cummings, "On the referendum #20: the campaign, physics and data science – Vote Leave's 'Voter Intention Collection System' (VICS) now available for all," Dominic Cummings Blog, 29 October 2016, https://dominiccummings.com/tag/ppe/, accessed 17 May 2021.

50 Jeremy Waldron, "Theoretical Foundations of Liberalism," in *Liberal Rights: Collected Papers 1981–1991*, ed. by Jeremy Waldron (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1993), pp. 35–62, here p. 61.

likely to believe that it is "the theorist's job is to defend her own views" and that philosophers has "authority to tell us *what is actually legitimate for us here and now*."[51] These general characteristics of public philosophy in the UK differ sharply from the way political theorists tend to engage with politics in Germany.

4 Germany: Indirect Engagement in the Public Sphere

In contrast to the analytic approach that dominates the UK, philosophy in Germany is defined by the continental tradition. Unlike analytics, who prefer to apply their insights from within governmental institutions, practitioners of the continental method instead prefer to engage with politics indirectly. These differing approaches to public philosophy are deeply rooted in the respective methodological orientations of analytic and continental philosophy. Whereas the former is confident in its ability to contribute to the project of "generating reasons [...] that guide political judgements about institutions and/or forms of conduct" in the abstract and apply these to concrete policy problems without specialized knowledge, the latter are less interested in providing constructive "action guidance." Instead, they argue that "political philosophy stands as a form of critical reflection on our practices."[52]

The different tasks that these two approaches assign to political theory lead them to occupy different roles and places when they engage with politics. In contrast to the internal place within the institutionalized policy process preferred by most analytic public philosophers in the UK, the continental approach favored in Germany emphasizes the role that political theorists play as public intellectuals, who work outside by system to encourage political deliberation by "writing letters to newspapers, appearing in the media, setting up pressure groups, helping to fund campaigns," etc.[53] There are a number of different reasons that explain this difference.

To start, unlike analytic philosophers, continental social and political theorists believe that their lack of specialized knowledge of specific policy areas disqualifies them from making expert judgments about what should be done. However, despite these limitations, continental thinkers do believe that they have a

51 Baderin, *Political Theory and Public Opinion*, pp. 217, 225.
52 Owen, "Reasons and Practices of Reasoning," pp. 173, 174.
53 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 8.

lot to offer by "systematically considering the interrelations between different social value spheres."[54] While they cannot contribute to the policy process directly through their own expertise, the political theorist as public intellectual still has a role to play "a person who has devoted his or her life to thinking in general terms about the affairs of this world and the broader context of things."[55]

Secondly – and perhaps even more importantly – in addition to their more constrained view of what "what theories can accomplish," continental philosophers prefer to act as public intellectuals due to their different understanding of the relationship between theory and practice.[56] Whereas analytics believe that they can take on the role of a "philosopher-investigator" who can offer "a general theoretical perspective, informed by public views, which can provide guidance when special interests collide," continental philosophers contend that the academic search for truth must remain separate from social and political interventions.[57] They do not want to mix theory and practice too directly "for fear of their mutual corruption and contamination."[58]

Differences in their respective systems of higher in the UK and Germany also play an important role. In the previous section, I highlighted the central place of Oxford's PPE degree in British political life and the way that it gave public philosophers an avenue into public policy through their former students serving in government. While other countries have educational institutions that play a similar role in educating the ruling class – the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in the US and the École nationale d'administration (ENA) in France are the two most obvious foreign equivalents to the UK's PPE – the highly egalitarian university system in the FRG has not allowed an equivalent degree program that would allow its teachers to "to govern the world" through their former students, as Jowett sought to do through PPE. While certain universities are recognized as centers for certain disciplines – the association of the Goethe-Universität Frankfurt am Main with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School is a

54 Harry F. Dahms, "Theory in Weberian Marxism: Patterns of Critical Social Theory in Lukacs and Habermas," *Sociological Theory* 15:3 (1997): 181–214, here: 207.

55 Havel, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals".

56 Jürgen Habermas, *The Past as Future: Vergangenheit als Zukunft*, transl. by Max Pensky (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), pp. 99–120.

57 Rutger Claassen, "Making Capability Lists: Philosophy Versus Democracy," *Political Studies* 59:3 (2011): 491–508, here: 504f.; Jonathan Wolff and Avner de-Shalit, *Disadvantage* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2007), p. 97.

58 Keith Haysome, "Civil Society and Social Movements," in *Jürgen Habermas: Key Concepts*, ed. by Barbara Fultner (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 177–195, here p. 193.

good example – none of these offer students or their professors a direct line to into government or the policy process.

In order to explore how continental political philosophy relates to political practice in Germany, I will focus on the work of Jürgen Habermas. His work is particularly relevant not only because he is the most important philosopher of the postwar era, but also because he has engaged extensively in political debates, acting as "an engaged public intellectual in the very same 'political public sphere' that he theorized as a philosopher."[59] It is also intellectually interesting, because although the Frankfurt School, with which Habermas is strongly associated, does aim to link the critic's "activity is the construction of the social present" by making theory into "a force within [society] to stimulate change," it does not seek to do so through direct intervention in the policy process.[60] Instead, critical theory has aimed to fuel transformation by raising the consciousness of the public regarding certain important issues by – in Habermas's words – "broaden[ing] the spectrum of relevant arguments in an attempt to improve the lamentable level of public debates."[61]

This indirect, mediated approach to public philosophy reflects Habermas's relatively constrained view of the discipline. Unlike analytics, who tend to be more optimistic about what they can do, continental philosophers warn us "not to expect any more or anything different from theories than what they can achieve – and that's little enough."[62] As an institutionalized profession pursued within the modern university, Habermas notes that philosophy is engaged in the search for "scientific truth as a form of truth which can be defined only in terms of methodological research."[63] As a result, he concludes that "one has to talk about philosophical questions philosophically, sociological questions sociologically, political questions politically."[64]

Habermas's interpretation of the theoretical enterprise as oriented towards *Wahrheit* and *Verstehen* builds closely on Weber. In light of the separation of val-

59 Max Pensky, "Historical and Intellectual Contexts," in *Jürgen Habermas: Key Concepts*, ed. by Barbara Fultner (New York: Acumen Publishing, 2013), pp. 13–32, here p. 31.

60 Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, transl. by Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Continuum Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 188–243, here pp. 221, 215.

61 Jürgen Habermas, "An Avantgardistic Instinct for Relevances: The Role of the Intellectual and the European Cause," in *Europe: The Faltering Project*, transl. by Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), pp. 49–58, here p. 52.

62 Habermas, *The Past as Future*, p. 99.

63 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, "The Scholar, the Intellectual, and the Essay: Weber, Lukács, Adorno, and Postwar Germany," *The German Quarterly* 70:3 (1997): 217–232, here: 218.

64 Habermas, *The Past as Future*, p. 114.

ue spheres, each of which operates and has to be understood according to its own internal logic, Habermas denies the possibility of "offering a theory that's supposed to be able to solve all of life's problems." Instead, he argues, "[t]o get anything out of theoretical work, you have to follow it for its own sake." More specifically, Habermas notes that scientific theories can, at best, "make us more sensitive to the ambivalences of development: they can contribute to our ability to understand the coming uncertainties."[65]

As a result of the separation of various disciplines and the rise of specialized forms of knowledge that operate with their own internal logics, Habermas argues that modern philosophy must forego any claim to be the final arbiter and judge of knowledge. Instead, as a form of what he calls "postmetaphysisches Denken," it must accept that it is merely a "Platzhalter und Interpret" that helps to translate the specialized, technical insights of the other sciences to the discourse of everyday life.[66] He notes:

> Whereas [natural and social] science focuses exclusively on an object domain, philosophy keeps its eye at the same time on the insight provided by a corresponding learning processes, that is, on what the knowledge we have acquired about the world (including the human being as another entity in the world) means 'for us.' It operates in a dimension in which changes in our understanding of the world and of ourselves interact.[67]

Even though it is reduced "to elucidate[ing] the nature of situations in which people have the choice to redefine the rules and regulations by which they live," for Habermas philosophy can still contribute to practice by "systematically considering the interrelations between different social value spheres." While the theorist may feel the temptation to short-circuit this process my moving directly from ideals to their realization, as applied analytic philosophers and realists might advocate, Habermas argues that this is no longer possible, because "[t]he question of whether a specific 'practice' advances a certain goal cannot be decided beforehand, within the context of even the most complex theory."[68]

This conception of philosophy has important implications for how political theory can be applied to politics. While it is somewhat similar to Wolff's engaged approach, this form of analytic public philosophy still seeks to "allow political philosophers to enter into the policy debates" on a number of different issues *qua*

65 Habermas, *The Past as Future*, pp. 113, 99, 116.

66 Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical Introductions: Five Approaches to Communicative Reason* (Cambridge: Polity, 2018), p. 154.

67 Habermas, *Philosophical Introductions*, p. 147.

68 Dahms, "Theory in Weberian Marxism," pp. 207, 195, 206.

philosopher.[69] By contrast, Habermas's continental approach relies on a strict separation of the academic work of the political theorist, who pursues questions with an orientation to truth based on disciplinary norms, from the public intellectual, who is "auf die Mobilisierung der jeweils relevanten Themen, Informationen und Argumente für öffentliche Kontroversen beschränkt" since "die Bürger sollen ja selber im Lichte konkurrierender Auffassungen ihre Entscheidungen in der Wahlkabine mehr oder weniger rational treffen."[70]

Unlike analytic public philosophers, who argue that political theory can (and in some cases perhaps even must) have direct implications for "discussions of the practicalities of political action and choice," Habermas instead argues that the academic search for truth must remain separate from the social and political interventions of public intellectuals, who seek to contribute to democratic legitimacy by raising the quality of debate in the public sphere.[71] Although this is not "the kind of division of labour in which one thing has nothing to do with the other," Habermas has also sought to enforce a strict separation between them.[72]

As a result, he argues that public intellectual can now only influence political practice by helping to combat the manipulation of democratic discourse by spin doctors, interest groups and political parties, which results in a "Neutralisierung der Staatsbürger."[73] This understanding explains Habermas's focus on the role that the media plays in facilitating the flow of discussions and conclusions between the informal debates within civil society and the formal public sphere of institutions vested with decision-making powers. Given that the political philosopher as public intellectual „engagiert sich [...] für öffentliche Interessen gleichsam im Nebenberuf, ohne dafür seinen professionellen Umgang mit den eigensinnig strukturierten Sinnzusammenhängen aufzugeben," they retain the ability to "speak truth to power" because their livelihood does not depend on their popularity, the need to sell advertisements or any other incentives that govern journalists, television personalities or other individuals whose primary pro-

69 Kouris and Wolff, "Philosophy & Public Policy".

70 Jürgen Habermas, "Moralischer Universalismus in Zeiten politischer Regression. Jürgen Habermas im Gespräch über die Gegenwart und sein Lebenswerk," *Leviathan* 48:1 (2020): 7–28, here: 15.

71 Mark Philp, "What is to be done? Political Theory and Political Realism," *European Journal of Political Theory* 9:4 (1 October 2010): 466–484, here: 467.

72 Jürgen Habermas, *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews*, ed. by Peter Dews (London: Verso, 1992), p. 127.

73 Jürgen Habermas, „Über Den Begriff Der Politischen Beteiligung," in *Arbeit, Erkenntnis, Fortschritt: Aufsätze, 1954–1970* (Amsterdam: Verlag de Munter, 1970), p. 270.

fession or 'anchor job' involves work in the public sphere."[74] He therefore argues that public intellectuals are called to speak out "when current events are threatening to spin out of control – but then promptly, as an early warning system."[75]

While Habermas defends the right of the political theorist to intervene in public debate as a citizen and as a public intellectual, he argues that they betray their professional vocation if they delude themselves into believing that theory "can facilitate better, more effective political action on its own."[76] Although Guess, one of his most ardent critics, accuses Habermas of creating "ideal theory of how we should act, and then [...] apply[ing] that ideal theory to the action of political agents," Habermas explicitly rejects this model.[77] In contrast to this straightforward two step approach, he instead divides the relationship between theory and practice into three separate functions. The development of a theory based on verifiable statements that „die wissenschaftlichen Diskursen standhalten" is followed by the identification of actors and movements who engage in the „die Organization von Aufklärungsprozessen, in denen solche Theoreme angewendet [sind]." Finally, political leaders within these groups come together to select „angemessener Strategien [...] [für] die Führung des politischen Kampfes"[78]

Within this tripartite process, Habermas argues that philosophers are only in a privileged position in regard the first step, in which they are engaged in theoretical research oriented towards truth. In this sense, theory "effects change precisely by remaining itself."[79] Although social and political theory seeks to understand the theoretical preconditions for the second stage as well, Habermas argues that it cannot intervene directly, as the process of enlightenment must be based on „der in praktischen Diskursen zu erzielende Konsensus unter den Beteiligten" if it is to reflect their use of practical reason and not merely the compulsion of rhetoric or ideology. He concludes: „ein politischer Kampf schließlich kann nur legitim geführt werden unter der Voraussetzung, daß alle folgenreichen Entscheidungen vom praktischen Diskurs der Beteiligten abhängig gemacht wer-

74 Jürgen Habermas, "Heinrich Heine und die Rolle des Intellektuellen in Deutschland," *Merkur* 40:6 (Juni, 1986): 453–468, here: 463; Habermas, *An Avantgardistic Instinct*, p. 55.

75 Habermas, *An Avantgardistic Instinct*, p. 55.

76 McKean, "What Makes a Utopia Inconvenient," p. 881.

77 Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, p. 8.

78 Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis. Sozialphilosophische Studien* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), p. 37.

79 Gerhard Richter and Theodor W. Adorno, "Who's Afraid of the Ivory Tower? A Conversation with Theodor W. Adorno," *Monatshefte* 94:1 (2002): 10–23, here: 19.

den – auch und erst recht hier gibt es keinen privilegierten Zugang zur Wahrheit."[80]

In addition to being limited by his continental interpretation of the limits of philosophical knowledge and his strict separation of theory from practice, Habermas's view of public philosophy is shaped by a third important influence drawn from his personal experiences: the widespread collaboration of German thinkers with the Nazi regime. While some passively participated in the process of *Gleichschaltung* (coordination) that resulted in the firing of Jewish professors and the reorganization of curricula, others took an active part in linking the university completely to the totalitarian project of the Third Reich.

As a student in the 1950s, Habermas was particularly shocked to discover how many leading German legal and political theorists and philosophers, including Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger and his *Doktorvater*, Ernst Rothacker, had not only cooperated with the Nazi regime, but had also actively and publicly supported Adolf Hitler's totalitarian policies. This lack of judgment was, for Habermas, evidence of a *déformation professionnelle* that led these thinkers to believe that they could use Hitler as a vehicle to realize their theoretical ideals by "leading the *Führer*" (*den Führer führen*).[81] Following Theodor Adorno, who writes disdainfully of these "elitist desires for authority" (*elitären Herrschaftswünsche*), Habermas insists that German theorists have given up their right to act as "teachers of the nation."[82] While Habermas did not want to give up on what he still saw as his Kantian duty of scholars to publicly adopt a "'critical' stance" against "notions of scientific and technological progress directed by the state," he became very wary of what he saw as the tendency of philosophers – particularly *German* philosophers – to be drawn into an "intellectual romance with fascism" via a broader "seduction of unreason" directed against modernity and the Enlightenment.[83]

Although Habermas still believes that philosophy is "supposed to play a public role in the context of a liberal political culture," as a continental political theorist he seeks to maintain a certain distance between philosophy and politics.[84]

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80 Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis*, pp. 38, 39.

81 Otto Pöggeler, „Den Führer führen? Heidegger und kein Ende," *Philosophische Rundschau* 32:1 (1985): 26–67.

82 Theodor W. Adorno, *Eingriffe: Neun kritische Modelle* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1963), p. 32; Habermas, *Autonomy and Solidarity*, p. 199.

83 Habermas, *Philosophical Introductions*, p. 152; Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

84 Habermas, *Philosophical Introductions*, p. 152.

In part, this is rooted in his more modest conception of the limits of philosophy, in part in his desire to separate theory from practices so that it "does not sabotag[e] thinking and thereby itself," and in large part by his personal, very German experience of how badly things can go wrong when philosophers apply their ideas to practice directly.[85]

This is not to say that Habermas rejects public engagement by philosophers *tout court*; he does not. However, he does not think that it is appropriate for philosophers to enter into the policy process directly, as analytic political theorists are wont to do. Instead, like other continential thinkers, including Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu, he separates the role that the theorist plays plays as an academic researcher from that of the public intellectual.[86] Although he "consider[s] it impossible to map [*unmittelbar abzubilden*] theoretical positions directly onto party-political ones," this allows the practical "void left by Habermas the philosopher is filled by Habermas the intellectual."[87]

While there is obviously much more to be said on this topic, the basic differences between how analytic philosophers in the UK and continental theorists in Germany seek to engage with 'real' politics are clear. In particular, whereas the former favor "connecting political reality and political theory" through direct participation in the policy process, the latter prefer to operate at a distance, presenting their arguments in the public sphere as public intellectuals, using theory to inform "the scope of viable forms of practice, enabling us to address the type(s) of practice likely to succeed" without claiming any normative authority over their fellow citizens.[88] Given that political philosophy "continues to be torn between the urge to be ever more sophisticated as 'science' and the aspiration to contribute to broad public enlightenment or democratic civic engagement," these differences raise a number of important questions.[89] In particular, although both claim

85 Fabian Freyenhagen, "Adorno's Politics: Theory and Praxis in Germany's 1960s," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 40:9 (2014): 867–893, here: 878.

86 See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980); Pierre Bourdieu, Gisele Sapiro and Brian McHale, "Fourth Lecture. Universal Corporatism: The Role of Intellectuals in the Modern World," *Poetics Today* 12:4 (1991): 655–669.

87 Habermas quoted in Matthew G. Specter, *Habermas: An Intellectual Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 141; Thomas Biebricher, "The Practices of Theorists: Habermas and Foucault as Public Intellectuals," *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 37:6 (2011): 709–734, here: 719.

88 Rossi, "Reality and Imagination", p. 510; Dahms, "Theory in Weberian Marxism," p. 208.

89 Jeffrey C. Isaac, "For a More Public Political Science," *Perspectives on Politics* 13:2 (2015): 269–283, here: 272.

to respect democratic legitimacy, there is a danger that public philosophy might "supplant or short circuit the democratic process, not contribute to it."[90]

5 A Plea for a Democratic Public Philosophy

On its face, there is nothing undemocratic about philosophers applying their insights to public policy by serving as political advisors or by engaging in the policy process by sitting on governmental boards and commissions, which are legally appointed by duly elected representatives of the people. Insofar as such a process ensures evidence-based policy-making that is based on the kind of expertise that is necessary to achieve political goals then it can hardly be seen as objectionable. The bigger question is whether philosophy – in either its analytic or continental variant – can offer this kind of expertise. Whereas the former usually think that their skills in logic and argumentation are readily transferrable to different areas of life despite their lack of specialized knowledge, the latter's tendency to critique and skepticism of foundational epistemologies lead them to argue that philosophy can no longer claim to offer "a theory that's supposed to be able to solve all of life's problems."[91]

Regardless of where one comes down on this debate about kind of knowledge modern philosophy can produce, it is clear that the analytic approach – especially when combined with the kind of privileged access offered by close relationship between the elitist, centralized and highly educational and political systems in the UK – poses more dangers for democratic legitimacy given its tendency to treat the citizenry as passive objects "whose eyes are to be opened by the social theorist."[92] This problematic attitude is particularly visible in the kind of training offered by the Oxford PPE program. As Trevor Pateman noted in his 1968 critique of this degree, PPE does not respect the idea that public policy should ultimately be based on the desires and choices of citizens, expressed both through periodic elections and the outcome of debate within the public sphere. Instead, he argues that PPE is "ideal training for the social engineer" who operates behind the back of citizens within the corridors of power.[93]

This view is seconded by the Labour peer Stewart Wood, who took the degree in the 1980s. He notes that PPE "does still feel like a course for people who are

90 Swift and White, "Political Theory," p. 55.
91 Habermas, *The Past as Future*, p. 113.
92 Habermas, *The Past as Future*, p. 101.
93 Pateman quoted in Beckett, "PPE: The Oxford Degree that Runs Britain".

going to run the Raj in 1936."[94] Ironically, despite his own skepticism, Wood continued to run seminars for PPE students while serving in various governmental roles, including as an advisor to Ed Miliband. The fact that this degree was designed specifically to enable the philosophers teaching within it to "govern the world" through their former students, only increases this worry.

This potential problem is not confined to PPE; it is also a constant threat to analytic public philosophy more generally. It is true that the engaged approach advocated by Wolff, with its emphasis on understanding the problem at hand and on reaching consensus, seeks to avoid these problems given. However, given its preference for direct intervention in the policy process itself, it is much easier for analytic philosophers to slip into advocating their own preexisting views by imposing their own ideas as "normative guidance about how we should act in the real world."[95] In contrast to the more modest, constrained understanding of what philosophy has to offer public policy, the more robust analytic belief that their "particular skills," including "the making of careful distinctions, an understanding of how to assess and examine arguments about values, arguments for and against political principles," can serve as important "contributions to the democratic process" can more easily lead to a kind of "neo-Leninism" that does not respect democratic norms because it thinks it knows better what is needed than the average citizen.[96]

This would not be a problem if these analytic public philosophers were operating from the outside, merely offering their ideas to their fellow citizens within the public sphere. However, since PPE, the model of democratic underlabouring and analytic public philosophy all advocate giving philosophers a direct, "specific place in the political and policymaking process" by having them serve as advisors or as members of policy committees, this approach runs the danger of bypassing public deliberation.[97] While this development is clearly driven by intellectual trends within analytic philosophy, it is also a response to changing incentives within higher education policy, largely driven by developments in new public management within the UK. As universities and individual academics have been pushed to compete for funding with each other at a time of decreasing public support for research, the funding bodies tasked with creating these competitive internal markets within this sector "are increasingly looking to

94 Wood quoted in Beckett, "PPE: The Oxford Degree that Runs Britain".

95 John Horton, "What might it Mean for Political Theory to be More 'realistic'?," *Philosophy* 45:2 (2017): 487–501, here: 490.

96 Swift and White, *Political Theory, Social Science, and Real Politics*, pp. 54, 56. Raymond Geuss explicitly advocates neo-Leninism. See Geuss, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, p. 99.

97 Swift and White, *Political Theory, Social Science, and Real Politics*, p. 49.

researchers to show their research has quantifiable, real-world impacts." As a result, philosophers and other academics are being forced to choose between pursuing basic research for its own sake and the financial "need to demonstrate impact in the broader society."[98]

The real problem with these trends is that they encourage philosophers to act behind the backs of their fellow citizens.[99] As Hannah Arendt points in the German version of her essay "Truth and Politics," the engaged philosopher must always remember that their status comes from their disciplinary search for truth governed by disciplinary norms. As a result – and especially in the German context – they must be wary of giving into the desire to exert power. After all, „Der Philosoph, der in die Öffentlichkeit eingreifen will, ist kein Philosoph mehr, sondern ein Politiker; er will nicht mehr nur Wahrheit, sondern Macht."[100]

Does this mean that analytic public philosophy is not viable or that philosophers should refuse to participate directly in the policy process when asked to do so? Of course not. However, they must keep Jo Wolff's warnings about the dangers of doing do in mind in order to ensure that they practicing a form of engaged theory that is focused on understanding the policy problem at hand and which recognizes that as philosophers "we don't have an answer for everything."[101] In particular, whether operating as public intellectuals or public philosophers, in their practical interventions political theorists "must renounce all other forms of authority and narcissism."[102]

98 Agata Mrva-Montoya and Edward Luca, "Book Publishing Sidelined in the Game of University Measurement and Rankings," *The Conversation*, 17 May 2021.

99 Wolff, *Ethics and Public Policy*, p. 8.

100 Hannah Arendt, „Wahrheit und Politik," in *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft. Übungen im politischen Denken I* (Munich: Piper, 2000), p. 330; my translation.

101 Kouris and Wolff, "Philosophy & Public Policy".

102 Habermas, *Philosophical Introductions*, pp. 56f.