

# Critical Theory in (a Time of) Crisis

## A two-day Early Career & Postgraduate Conference

Organised by the *Centre for Applied Philosophy, Politics & Ethics* (Brighton) and the  
*Research Centre for Studies in Social and Political Thought* (Sussex)

**5 and 6 November 2019**  
Hosted by the University of Brighton

### DAY 1

University of Brighton (City Campus)  
Grand Parade Building Room 318b

#### 09.00 – 09.15 – REGISTRATION

09.15 – 11.00 – **PANEL 1** (Followed by 45 mins of Q&A with the audience).

Paul Ingram (Birkbeck, University of London, UK)

*The Institutionalization of Adorno and the Viability of Social Pathology.*

Cain Shelley (London School of Economics and Political Science, UK)

*Freeing socialism from its attachment to Marx? Honneth's recent political turn and its limits.*

Neil Harris (University of Sussex, UK)

*Beyond Domestication: Adorno and the Reanimation of Social Pathology Diagnosis*

\*\*\* Short Break \*\*\*

11.15 to 13.00 – **PANEL 2** (Followed by 45 mins of Q&A with the audience).

Luke Edmeads (University of Brighton, UK)

*Adorno's relevance: Non-identity as a response to domination in contemporary society.*

(Lynn) Alena Roth (University of Sussex, UK)

*Re-thinking Social Transformation: Utopian Consciousness within Critical Theory.*

Muhammad Qasim (University of Sussex, UK)

*An anticolonial deficit in critical theory and a need for de-colonial turn in it.*

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13.00 – 14.00 – Lunch break  
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**14.00 – 15.30 – PANEL 3** (Followed by 45 mins of Q&A with the audience).

Sabrina Muchová (Charles University, Czechia)

***Art and Democracy: Wellmer's Aesthetic Conception.***

Aikaterini-Maria Lakka (Sorbonne, France)

***"O, speak to (for) me no more! These words like daggers enter in my ears": understanding intellectuals' role in a time of crisis.***

\*\*\* Coffee break \*\*\*

**15.45 – 17.15 – Keynote speaker:** Prof. Michael J. Thompson (William Paterson University, US)

**Title:** *Critique of Crisis of the Crisis of Critique? Rethinking the Project of Critical Theory.*

**ABSTRACT.** Critical theory has taken a decisive turn away from Marx and Marxian ideas since the 1980s. The turn toward "postmetaphysics" embraces instead the ideas of Kant and a reconstructed Hegelianism that cuts off much of critical theory's links with Marxian ideas. I see this as a turn toward neo-Idealism and a diminution of the capacity for critical theory to respond to the dynamics of neoliberalism, particularly its more inflamed phase in the age of authoritarian populism. I will show why this paradigm shift has led critical theory astray and suggest an alternative what I call critical social ontology that can help us not only with the project of critical diagnosis of modern society, but also a more compelling paradigm for articulating a normative vision for a rational, democratic society.

**BIO.** Michael J. Thompson is Associate Professor of Political Science at William Paterson University. He is the author of *The Republican Reinvention of Radicalism* (forthcoming), *The Perversion of Subjectivity: Toward a Critical Theory of Consciousness* (forthcoming) and *The Politics of Inequality* (2007). His many edited volumes include *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Theory* (forthcoming) and *Georg Lukacs Reconsidered: Critical Essays on Politics, Philosophy, and Aesthetics* (2011).

**19.30 – Conference Diner at the NEW ERA restaurant (details – see conference pack)**



**DAY 2**

University of Brighton (City Campus)  
Grand Parade Building Room 318b

**09.00 – 10.45 – PANEL 4**

Paul Ewart (University of Sussex, UK)

***Capitalist Realism, Popular Critical Theory and New Left Movements.***

Roderick Howlett (University of Sheffield)

***“Reclaiming the Radical Enlightenment: a response to Post-Truth”.***

David Gould (University of Leeds, UK)

***Critical Theory in a Time of Crisis: What is a Crisis?***

\*\*\* Coffee break \*\*\*

**11.00 – 12.45 – PANEL 5**

Ben Cross (Wuhan University, China)

***Justice, Social Justice, and Critical Theory - why activists have got it right, and analytic philosophers have got it wrong.***

Jacopo Condo' (University of Brighton, UK)

***Mental Health & the limits of procedural conception of autonomy in critical theories.***

Joseph Backhouse – Barber (University of Sussex, UK)

***‘Making the social play along’: Luhmann’s recognition of both subjective and social aspects of experience.***

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**12.45 – 13.45 – Lunch break**  
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**13.45 – 15.00 – PANEL 6**

Sara Kermanian (University of Sussex)

***Time and the Politics of International Imaginaries: Rethinking the impasse of Derridean critique of modern temporality.***

Harrison Lechley-Yuill (University of Brighton)

***Deconstruction: The Proper and Violence.***

\*\*\* Coffee Break \*\*\*

**MIND**

**15.15 – 17.00: Keynote Speaker:** Prof. Darrow Schecter (University of Sussex)

**Title:** *On the sociology of functional differentiation: What kind of dialectics underpin a critical theory of contemporary society'?*

Darrow Schecter is Professor of Critical Theory and Modern European History at the University of Sussex. His latest book, *Critical Theory and Sociological Theory: On Late Modernity and Social Statehood* (Critical Theory and Contemporary Society, 2019) critically engages with three of the most prominent challenges of Democracy in the twenty-first century: populism, neoliberalism and globalisation. This book examines such challenges by investigating how the conditions of democratic statehood have been altered at several key historical intervals since 1945. It demonstrates that the formal mechanisms of democratic statehood, such as elections, have always been complemented by civic, cultural, educational, socio-economic and constitutional institutions that mediate between citizens and state authority. Rearticulating critical theory with a contemporary focus, the book shows why a sociological approach is urgently needed to address conceptual deficits and explain how the formal mechanisms of democratic statehood need to be complemented and updated in new ways today.

**17.00 – 18.45 – Special Event: Wine Reception with philosophical poetry reading by Emeritus Prof. Christopher Norris** (University of Cardiff).

Christopher Norris is Emeritus Professor in Philosophy at the University of Cardiff. In his early career he taught English Literature, then moved to Philosophy *via* literary theory, and has now moved back in the direction of creative writing. He has published widely on the topic of deconstruction and is the author of more than thirty books on aspects of philosophy, literature, the history of ideas, and music. More recently he has turned to writing poetry in various genres, including – unusually – that of the philosophical verse-essay. He has published several collections of poems including *The Cardinal's Dog*, *For the Tempus-Fugitives*, *The Trouble with Monsters*, *The Matter of Rhyme*, and *A Partial Truth*. His political poems appear regularly on the website *Culture Matters* and his more philosophical pieces in the weekly magazine *The Wednesday*. He has lectured and held visiting posts at universities around the world, and his books have been translated into many languages.

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