Radical Democratic Pluralism: An Alternative?

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Ayşe Seda Yüksel

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To my mother,

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ABSTRACT

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This study will concentrate on the philosophical debate on pluralism in the last two decades, underlining in particular the radical democratic critique of liberalism through a perspective more sensitive to differences. The research question which guides the study is whether radical democracy can stand as a viable and consistent alternative to liberal pluralism. In order to do this, radical democratic pluralism is first compared with liberal pluralism and then with communitarian pluralism, which is the most significant critiques of liberal pluralism from within liberal theory. The study will distinguish between radical democracy as a critique and radical democracy as a project. It is argued that although radical democracy is correct in its diagnosis concerning the problems and deficits of liberal and communitarian pluralisms, it fails to offer concrete methods and strategies to solve these problems due to four main reasons which are grouped under two categories. The first category, which consists of theoretical shortcomings of radical democracy, examines the latter's exclusive focus on discourse as an all-explaining category and its formulation of a hierarchy of differences. The second category, on the other hand, deals with the lack of procedural and practical solutions in radical democratic project, and highlights the invisibility of the economic dimension and the lack of mechanisms to deal with antagonisms in practice.

KISA ÖZET

Radikal Demokrat Çoğulculuk: Bir Alternatif mi?

Seda Yüksel

Bu çalışma son yirmi yıl içerisinde siyaset felsefesinde çoğulculuk kavramı etrafında şekillenen tartışmalara odaklanacaktır. Bu bağlamda özellikle liberalizmi farklılıklara daha duyarlı bir bakış açısından eleştiren radikal demokrasi üzerinde durulacaktır. Çalışmaya yön veren soru radikal demokrasinin liberal çoğulculuk karşısında uygulanabilir ve tutarlı bir alternatif oluşturup oluşturamayacağıdır. Bunu yaparken radikal demokratik çoğulculuk önce liberal çoğulculukla, daha sonra da liberal çoğulculuk anlayışına – liberal teori içinden – yönelik en ciddi eleştirilerden birini oluşturan toplulukçu çoğulculukla karşılaştırılacaktır. Çalışma radikal demokrasiyi bir eleştiri ve bir proje olarak ikiye ayıracak, radikal demokrasinin liberal ve toplulukçu çoğulculuğun sorunlarını doğru teşhis ettiğini, ancak bu sorunları çözebilecek somut önerilerde bulunamadığını iddia edecektir. Radikal demokratik projenin başarısızlığı teorik ve pratik sorunlar olmak üzere iki kategoride incelenecektir. Teorik sorunlar adı altında radikal demokrasinin söylemi herşeyi açıklayan mutlak bir kategori olarak algılaması ve farklılıklar arasında bir hiyerarşi belirlemesi; pratik sorunlar adı altında ise radikal demokrasinin ekonomiyi göz ardı etmesi ve çatışmaları çözecek mekanizmalar üretememesi irdelenecektir.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Our world is a world of increasing uniformity due to processes of globalization. Today the world is bound together more strongly than ever before through an intense economic, cultural and political interdependence which cuts across national borders. The unprecedented technological explosion, especially in the domain of transportation and information, which dramatically transformed our conceptions of time and space[1], is giving a further impetus to this interdependence. As many argue, the world is getting increasingly smaller. The rise of new communication technologies has reduced the distance between cultures, thereby intensifying their interaction, and has diffused 'civilization' to the remotest corners of the world.

Yet our world is also a world of differences. The presence of differences of all sorts has always been a major feature of social life and, as such, a central concern of philosophers since Ancient Greece. The major problem throughout history was not

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[1] A. Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', in A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 29.

the existence of differences *per se*, but to find ways of accommodating these differences in a peaceful way, hence the philosophical debate on pluralism.

Today, at a time when 'the end of history' is proclaimed following the 'triumph' of the liberal democratic discourse of equality and liberty, accommodating differences becomes a much more severe problem. The world is witnessing a proliferation of new identities and their demands for recognition, which were repressed and silenced before or unified around national projects. Moreover, due to intense interactions among cultures and across national frontiers, these voices became louder and their impact grew much more stronger.

Does globalization force us to rethink the concept of pluralism? This question constitutes this study's point of departure. The answer is both yes and no. Yes, because globalization transformed the relations between the national and the international, East and West, the First World and the Third World, the modern and the traditional by reconceptualizing our understanding of time and space. Thus, problems that were once confined within national borders have become global and/or globalized.[2] Pluralism does not constitute an exception.

The answer to the above question is also no, because globalization is in itself inadequate to understand why new identities emerged in the last two decades. The appearance of new identities can be better understood in relation to identity politics and new social movements, which have undermined the distinction between the political/public and the personal/private, and at the same time in relation to radical changes in the international political conjuncture, which problematized the notion of national belonging and gave rise to a series of ethnic and national conflicts.

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[2] F. Keyman, *Türkiye ve Radikal Demokrasi,* İstanbul: Alfa, 2000, p. 2.

Globalization is a catalyst in this process, a medium either amplifying the demands of new identities or spreading them to other parts of the world.

What follows is a study of the concept of pluralism, its different interpretations and formulations within and outside liberal theory, notably after the 1980s. Hence, it inevitably is a study of the concepts of identity and difference, since pluralism means a commitment to the multiplicity of identities and cultures, to the recognition of and the preservation and representation of differences. Rather than taking pluralism as a coherent theory of a particular school of thought, this study will take it as a variety of different interpretations and formulations on the basis of difference and the recognition of difference:

> Pluralism today is probably best regarded not so much as a particular school of thought or coherent body of theory –a proper 'ism', so to speak. Rather pluralism can be viewed as a key concept in the social sciences... Pluralism is in that sense a 'modal' concept and not a substantive 'end point' doctrine; essentially, it indicates our acknowledgement of multiplicity and difference across and within particular social fields or discourses.[3]

While examining these interpretations, special emphasis will be put on the debates in political philosophy, especially after the 1980s. In the light of these, the aim of this study is to explore the possibility of alternatives to liberal pluralism, regarding the proliferation of differences and the crisis of representation of constituencies that consist of a complex and hybrid structure which cannot be encompassed by the existing liberal theoretical framework and its neutral citizenship concept.

I.1 Context: Fragmented Identities in a Fragmented World

With the 'triumph' of liberal democracy in the beginning of 1990s, liberal democracy based on the key principles of liberty and equality is widely accepted as the dominant regulative framework of democratic societies in most parts of the world. The leading

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[3] G. McLennan, *Pluralism*, Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995, p. IX.

formulation of pluralism is thus the liberal one in which differences are celebrated in the name of the liberty and the autonomy of the individual.

Simultaneously, the last two decades witnessed the rise of discontented voices against the continuing increase in social inequalities, the nation-state's decreasing capacity for solving problems, which arose from new forms of social conflict based on gender, ethnicity, religion, race and environmental problems.[4] The relation between the nation-state and globalization was problematized.

Although the phenomenon of globalization is vast and cannot be fully treated in this Introduction, it is of importance for our purposes to highlight a few selected aspects in order to contextualize this research project and to underline its relevance in today's world. One such aspect concerns the common belief that globalization erodes the sovereignty of the nation-state and diminishes its capacity for solving problems since the nation-state is constrained by international economic and political treaties and institutions. As Keyman argues:

> The process of globalization dissolves the sovereignty of the nation-state which was taken for granted in modernity ... This can be witnessed in the crisis of the nation-state's capacity to solve problems ... its dependency on the global economic system and the emergence of a crisis of legitimacy within society.[5]

In a similar vein, David Held explains the crisis of the nation-state's sovereignty with the help of four disjunctures between the nation-state and the globalizing world. The first disjuncture is between the formal authority of the state and the actual system of production, distribution and exchange, which is subjected to the constraints of the world economy. The second gap is between the idea of state as an autonomous strategic-military actor and the development of the global system of states, namely

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[4] D. Trend, 'Democracy's Crisis of Meaning', in D. Trend (ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State,* New York: Routledge, 1996, pp. 7-19 and F. Keyman, *Türkiye ve Radikal Demokrasi,* pp. 10-39.
[5] F. Keyman, *Türkiye ve Radikal Demokrasi,* p. 9. My translation.

hegemonic powers and power blocs like NAFTA or the European Union. The third

area of disjunction is between the internal politics of nation-states and international

organizations which have the right to make laws that can be imposed on member

states. Finally, the fourth area of disjuncture is between the idea of citizenship which

bestows upon individuals rights and duties and the development of an international

law which subjects individuals, governments and non-governmental organizations to

a new system of regulation.[6] Drawing on these disjunctures, Held argues that 'the

operation of states, in an ever more complex international system, both limits their

autonomy and infringes ever more upon their sovereignty.'[7]

The argument of the crisis of nation-state takes us in two directions. The first

leads us to conceive globalization as a process of homogenization. The nation-state's

decreasing sovereignty and the growing cultural interactions between nations reduce

their differences and the world becomes a 'global village', with a single culture, a

single language and a single political and economic system.

This scenario has an extremely optimistic version, where Francis Fukuyama

proclaims the end of history following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the

triumph of liberal democracy and market economy.[8] Globalization in this scenario is

equivalent to the universalization of liberal democracy and its political and economic

package. Other versions, on the other hand, contend that globalization means

Westernization, and global processes function to impose Western cultural, political

or economic imperialism on the non-Western world.[9] Or they take globalization as

the 'Americanization' of global culture. The main proponents of this approach like

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[6] D. Held, 'The Decline of the Nation-State', in G. Eley and R. G. Suny (eds), *Becoming National: A Reader*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 408-12.
[7] D. Held, 'The Decline of the Nation-State', p. 415.
[8] F. Fukuyama, 'Reflections on the End of History, Five Years Later', *History and Theory*, 34:2, 1995.
[9] R. J. Holton, *Globalization and the Nation-State*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998, p. 163.

Herbert Schiller, George Ritzer stressed the dominance of USA in world's culture industry and economic order.[10]

Yet some scholars have recently pointed out that the central problem of today's globalization processes is the tension between homogenization and heterogenization.[11] That is to say, globalization is not only about homogenization, but also heterogenization and hybridization. According to Arjun Appadurai, for instance, globalization has to be seen as 'a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models'.[12] In this context, the instruments of homogenization used by globalization are absorbed into local political and cultural economies. Thus it makes more sense to conceptualize globalization as a matter of flows, instead relying on images of order and stability.[13] In short,

> The central feature of global culture today is the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thereby proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular.[14]

This heterogenization and/or hybridization can also be linked to the above argument of the crisis of the nation-state. The nation-state which was initially conceived as a homogenizing project lost its ability to unify groups which have different identities and cultures. To put it differently, the representation link between state and society was severed.[15] With the help new communication technologies and through the development of an international civil society, belonging assumed a transnational character.

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[10] H. Schiller, 'Vers un Nouveau Siècle d'Impérialism Américaine', *Le Monde Diplomatique,* August, 1998; H. Schiller, 'La Communication: une Affair d'Etat pour Washington', *Le Monde Diplomatique,* August, 1997; G. Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life,* California: Pine Forge Press, 1996.

[11] A. Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', p. 32.

[12] *Ibid.*

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 47.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

It needs to be stressed at this point that the emergence of new identities and the proliferation of differences cannot be explained solely by globalization. They are also products of a radical shift in conceptions of politics and dramatic changes in the international political conjuncture – e.g. the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

This new conception of politics caused the dissolution of traditional identities such as those based on religion, class and nationality, paving the way to the emergence of new identities which are built on gender, race, and ethnicity:

> [Their] message appears to be that political identity does indeed matter in politics, but that the identities that count are not the old identities stemming from nationhood and common citizenship, but *new, more fragmented identities that are often shared with others outside the boundaries of state.*[16]

This quotation is very significant since it emphasizes two distinct characteristics of the social struggles in the last decade and the demands made in the name of identity: first, the identities in question are more fragmented than their antecedents since they do not appeal to class, citizenship or nation but they cut across them by referring to more flexible, partial or voluntary socio-economic categories and, second, their demands transcend national borders. New social movements organized around a multiplicity of problems – gender, environment, peace, anti-racism, ethnicity, human rights and so on – not only provide alternative sites of struggle for these newly emerging identities, but also foster their influence. As Stuart Hall puts it, 'the question of identity never went away, but has come back with a particular kind of force'.[17]

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[15] F. Keyman, *Türkiye ve Radikal Demokrasi*, p. 10.
[16] D. Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, p.2. My emphasis.
[17] S. Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference', in G. Eley and R. G. Suny (eds), *Becoming National: A Reader*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 339.

Pushing the limits of traditional politics, new identities tried to make room for culture and cultural recognition in politics. This new understanding of politics was based on the idea that 'everything is political', since everything in social life implies power relations:

> *Everything* in social and cultural life is fundamentally to do with power. Power is at the centre of cultural politics. It is integral to culture. *All signifying practices – that is, all practices that have meaning – involves relations of power.*[18]

Power was not conceptualized on economic grounds, e.g. as the possession of forces of production. It was not conceptualized on 'political' grounds either, e.g. influence on decision-making processes, the right to vote, the right to represent, etc. The belief that if economic inequalities are eliminated and people are given equal political rights, cultural inequalities would automatically fade away was criticized by these new movements. The 'politics of recognition', which focuses on 'cultural injustices rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation and communication', it was argued, is not secondary and derivative of 'politics of distribution'.[19] It is certain that cultural inequalities are not reducible to economic or 'political' inequalities. For instance, many groups concentrated at the top of the economic hierarchy suffer from cultural inequalities or legal restrictions as in the case of gays in many countries or radical Muslims in Turkey.

We might then ask how does this new context characterized simultaneously by the globalization process and the redefinition of traditional politics affect the way the liberal democratic system deals with differences. The answer to this question can be found in what we may call a crisis of representation. It has been argued that liberal democratic institutions and the master narratives supporting them largely lost their

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[18] E. Baldwin *et al.*, *Introducing Cultural Studies,* Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall, 1999, p. 222
[19] For a more detailed defitinion of politics of distribution and recognition, see N. Fraser, 1998 cited in W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 332-3.

legitimacy.[20] The demands of emerging groups and the nation-state's inability to deal with these demands seems to have led to a search for new solutions. Liberal pluralism was under attack from within and outside liberal theory, on both practical and philosophical grounds.

I.2 Problem: Rethinking Pluralism

This study will concentrate on the philosophical debate on pluralism in the last twenty years which witnessed a radical change in the structure of societies and the way identities are conceived. The critics of liberalism stressed the necessity to question and redefine the constitutive tenets/elements of liberalism such as liberty, equality, rights, and citizenship through a perspective more sensitive to differences. This inevitably resulted in a radical critique of liberal pluralism and several attempts to offer alternatives to it. These critiques and attempts to offer alternatives acquire critical significance if they are situated in a historical context. They are raised against liberalism at a time when its 'other' – socialism – had disappeared in the mists of history, and when liberal pluralism had become the sole formulation of pluralism. At this critical juncture, political philosophy became the arena where the hegemony of existing liberal understandings of pluralism has been challenged, both from within liberal theory and from outside.

In this debate, the study will underline two lines of critique against liberalism, namely communitarianism and radical democracy. Communitarianism is given particular emphasis because it constitutes the first major attack on liberalism in the name of community and diversity, at the beginning of the 1980s. Arguing that liberalism neglects the value of community and communal values, communitarians accuse liberalism of being difference-blind since it is founded on a universalist

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[20] D. Trend, 'Democracy's Crisis of Meaning'; F. Keyman, *Türkiye ve Radikal Demokrasi*.

conception of person and society and is unable to grasp the diversity of different cultures. Nevertheless, communitarianism is not a total denial of liberalism but a critique from within, which attempts to correct liberalism. By the mid-90s, a substantial literature had already formed around the liberal-communitarian debate.

Less known but equally serious was the attack by radical democrats who grew out of the Marxist tradition who not only problematized liberal democracy and its theoretical and normative tenets, but also differed from classical Marxism by rejecting its central notion of class struggle. Liberal democracy is accused of failing to deliver on its promises of equality and civic participation and of being too willing to sacrifice the interest of diverse groups in the name of a broad consensus.[21] Like communitarians, the radical democratic attack on liberalism was also in the name of diversity. Nevertheless, these two critiques differed on many points. Communitarianism was an attempt to 'correct' liberal pluralism by reinforcing the community and communal values, whereas radical democracy was a radical break from liberal pluralism since it brought up the category of discourse, the idea of a fragmented identity through subject positions, and the necessity of collective action through new social movements.

Drawing on post-structuralism, post-Marxism and new social movements, radical democracy, with its new conceptualization of identity – on the basis of the concept of subject position – and anti-essentialist approach to political struggle, seems to be able to offer alternative analytical methods for a better conceptualization of pluralism in our global world.

But the question is whether it can effectively stand as an alternative or not. Then, in the light of the above discussion, the aim of this study is to consider whether

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[21] D. Trend, 'Democracy's Crisis of Meaning', p. 3.

radical democracy will be better able to cope with diversity than liberal democracy and communitarianism. In other words, the research question of this study is: does radical democratic pluralism constitute a viable alternative to liberal or communitarian pluralism?

In order to answer this question, it will be argued that two aspects of radical democracy need to be distinguished: radical democracy as a critique and radical democracy as a project. Drawing on this distinction, it will be claimed that if radical democratic project offers a formulation of politics more tolerant to differences and a better institutional framework to cope with diversity than liberal democracy and communitarianism, then it does constitute a viable alternative to liberal and communitarian pluralism.

While doing these, the study will concentrate on the normative debates on pluralism within political philosophy and will be limited to the exchange between liberals, communitarians and radical democrats in the last quarter of the twentieth century. Within liberal theory, the study will focus on the works of John Rawls and Isaiah Berlin, not only because they are the leading figures in liberal philosophy so far as the issue of pluralism is concerned, which in turn made them the main target of criticisms raised against liberal pluralism, but also developed two main alternative conceptions of pluralism within liberal theory. John Rawls signifying universalism and universal reason and Isaiah Berlin stressing the incompatibility of differences can be said to constitute two different, and sometimes conflicting, understandings of pluralism, which challenge liberal pluralism from inside. The communitarian critique of liberal pluralism, on the other hand, will be built upon the works of the main thinkers of this school of thought, namely Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel and Alasdair McIntyre, thereby offering a more general picture of the

alternative conception of pluralism they propose. Finally, radical democracy, the main challenge to liberal pluralism from outside liberal theory, will be explored in detail through the works of its main propagators, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe.

I.3 Method and Outline

This study will begin by addressing the following questions: What is pluralism? What are the main characteristics of liberal understanding of pluralism? What is the significance of communitarianism as a critique addressed to liberal democracy? How does communitarianism differ from liberalism? Hence the aim of the second chapter will be to provide an outline of liberal and communitarian pluralisms, rather than giving a total and complete theorized conceptualization of pluralism, since it is commonly argued that pluralism does not constitute a coherent theory and we can only talk about the pluralisms of different eras or theoretical frameworks.

First, the concept of pluralism will be introduced and a brief historical background will be given in order to set the stage for a detailed discussion of the contemporary philosophical debates on pluralism. After briefly examining Aristotle who is accepted as the first pluralist thinker in political philosophy, the chapter will map the relationship between pluralism and liberalism. I will begin by exploring the early liberal conception of pluralism, devoting particular attention to the work of John Locke and John Stuart Mill since their work constitutes the basis of contemporary liberalism. Continuing to keep track of pluralism in liberal theory, I will briefly summarize the main features of American empirical pluralism. Although empirical pluralism constitutes a turning point in the debate on pluralism with its emphasis on practical and empirical issues, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation since it advocates a completely different methodology in examining pluralism, on the

basis of empirical data. Rather this study aims to explore pluralism on normative and philosophical grounds.

Having provided a brief outline of early liberal and empirical pluralism, the chapter will continue by a detailed examination of the work of two thinkers who had a considerable influence in reshaping the nature of contemporary discussions on pluralism and who became the leading figures in late liberal thought. First, the chapter will examine John Rawls and his conception of 'reasonable pluralism'. Despite the fact that Rawls has never written on pluralism *per se*, but has developed his conception of 'reasonable pluralism' within his theory of justice, he has been the major target of criticisms concerning the recognition of differences within societies. Second, Isaiah Berlin and his notion of 'value-pluralism' will be taken up as a subject of inquiry. Defending a formulation of pluralism which is very different from that of Rawls, Berlin stressed the incompatibility and incommensurability of values.

The chapter will end by the main critique of liberal pluralism from within: communitarianism. I will stress the ways in which communitarians attempted to improve liberal pluralism by questioning its conception of self and society through a reinforcement of community and communal values.

The third chapter will be devoted to the examination of the main features of radical democracy and radical democratic pluralism. The questions that will be addressed in this context are: What are the main characteristics of radical democracy? How does it differ from communitarianism and liberalism? In the first place, the major characteristics of radical democracy and the ways it differs from Marxism will be outlined, and then, in the light of these, radical democratic pluralism and its main arguments will be summarized.

The third chapter of the study aims to provide a critical assessment of liberal, communitarian and radical democratic pluralisms and will revolve around the following questions: Is radical democracy solely a critique of liberal democracy? Or can it considered as a project? If so, what are the alternative practical applications that radical democracy offers as a project in the case of pluralism? Is radical democratic pluralism a viable alternative to liberal and communitarian pluralisms?

In the light of these questions, first, I will discuss the similarities and differences of these three approaches. Then, I will try to determine whether radical democracy can help us to solve/surpass the main tensions between liberals and communitarians. Following this, the viability of radical democracy as a project will be explored.

CHAPTER II

LIBERAL and COMMUNITARIAN PLURALISM

Pluralism is a difficult term to describe. Since the term pluralism is 'a purely abstract and generic term'[22], it has been described differently in different theories throughout history. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the concept of pluralism, and to discuss its various forms within liberal theory, laying special emphasis on the ways in which it has been used in the work of John Rawls and Isaiah Berlin. One of the most comprehensive critiques of liberal theory in the last two decades, namely communitarianism will also be discussed in this context. A discussion of communitarian critique which is based on the value of particularity and community is crucial as it leads to an alternative conception of pluralism within liberal theory. The central claim of communitarianism is that the value of community is undermined and neglected in liberal theory is in fact fundamental in the good life for human-beings.

Pluralist ideas can be first found in Ancient Greece, in the work of Aristotle. Nevertheless, the importance of pluralism for political and social life was fully acknowledged in the mid-twentieth century by American political scientists. Arguing

against a top-down model of society in which power is imposed from above by an elite, American pluralists assumed a model of society in which power is diffused and the decision-making process is a result of a balance among opposing forces in society. Although this approach to pluralism has been and still is influential, it did not formulate its arguments in normative terms but in descriptive terms.

An important figure in the normative debates on pluralism is John Rawls who has never written on pluralism *per se*, but has developed a particular conception of politics which later became pivotal to discussions of pluralism as he aims to create, with his theory of justice, a just society which will be based on the idea of consensus reached between reasonable citizens and their world views. Special emphasis will be laid on Rawls's work as he became the primary target of the communitarian and radical democratic critics of liberal pluralism in the 1990s. Another important figure that need to be emphasized is Isaiah Berlin whose understanding of pluralism has been widely referred to in the debates on liberal pluralism. Although the proponents of radical democratic pluralism have not been in dialogue with Berlin's works directly, there exist many parallels between the two. Hence Berlin and his understanding of pluralism will have vital importance in our discussion in the third chapter since it will be argued that radical democratic pluralism is closer to liberal pluralism – especially to Berlin's value pluralism – than it may believe. The chapter will end by an exploration of the communitarian critique of liberalism which claims to formulate a form of pluralism that puts more emphasis on the particular as opposed to the universal, and on the idea of common will.

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[22] G. McLennan, *Pluralism,* Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995, p. 25.

II.1 The Concept of Pluralism

Pluralism cannot be seen as a coherent school of thought; rather it consists of many perspectives covering different sets of meanings, preferences, values and problems. The word 'pluralism' may refer to an 'empirical claim' that different people in a given society hold different beliefs, or to a 'normative view' that such diversity is desirable.[23] It can be defined as a theory about the impact of 'sectional' and 'group' conflict on policy-making, which is based on the idea that political power is not concentrated in a single source like the state, but diffused among a number of interest-groups or institutions, as in the works of American pluralists, notably Robert Dahl.[24] Yet another discussion revolves around what is called 'value-pluralism' or 'meta-ethical pluralism'. This strand of pluralism is mostly associated with the work of Isaiah Berlin and basically claims that values cannot be reduced to a single hierarchy because they are either 'incompatible' or 'incommensurable'.[25]

These different conceptualizations and interpretations notwithstanding, this study will define pluralism on normative grounds, as 'a theorized preference for multiplicity over unicity, and for diversity over uniformity.'[26] In that sense, any theoretical standpoint based on diversity and multiplicity rather than monism – the idea of the world and of human society as a single intelligible structure[27] – can be defined as pluralist. Hence, pluralism cannot be attached to one school of thought or to a particular period in history; rather one can talk about the *pluralisms* of different theoretical frameworks or eras.[28]

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[23] J. Crowder, 'Pluralism And Liberalism', *Political Studies*, XIII, 1994, p. 293.
[24] A. H. Birch, *The Concept and Theories of Modern Democracy*, London: Routledge, 1994, p. 177.
[25] I. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969; J. Gray, *Two Faces of Liberalism*, Cambridge: Polity, 2000.
[26] G. McLennan, *Pluralism*, p. 25.
[27] Isaiah Berlin, 'The Originality of Machiavelli', cited in D. Kelly, 'The Political Thought of Isaiah Berlin', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 4:1, April 2002, p. 29.
[28] G. McLennan, *Pluralism*, pp. 25-7.

II.1.i Pluralism in Ancient Greece

In philosophy, we can trace back the tension between monism versus pluralism to Ancient Greece. The first pluralist ideas, concerning politics and the political community, can be found in Aristotle's works. In *Politics*, Aristotle calls for 'plurality, diversity and division in the good community' while criticizing Plato's search for unity. He argues that Plato's search for unity could lead to tyranny, suffocation of spirit or even to subversion of the political community itself.[29]

In Aristotle's view, *polis*, which is the worthiest political organization, is an aggregate of many different members. He writes: 'Not only is the *polis* composed of a number of men: it is also composed of different kinds of men, for similars cannot bring it into existence.'[30] For Aristotle, these differences are what characterizes the *polis*: they create a harmony and should not be eliminated in the name of unity. That is why he radically criticizes Plato:

> The cause of the fallacy into which Plato falls must be held to be the wrong character of the premiss (about the nature of unity) on which he bases his argument ... There is a point at which a *polis* by advancing in unity will cease to be a *polis* ... it may still be a *polis* but will come near to losing its essence ... it is as if you were to turn harmony into a mere unison, or to reduce a theme to a single beat.[31]

Nevertheless, Aristotle's pluralism implies a strict hierarchy between citizens – which was a highly restricted category – and non-citizens. Both in *Politics* in which he argues that the *polis* consists of 'different kinds of men' and in *Ethics* in which he claims that each species has a distinct 'nature', a strong emphasis on difference is clear. But a careful examination of these two books shows that his pluralist ideas have important shortcomings. In both *Ethics* and *Politics*, Aristotle strongly defends

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[29] R. Nisbet, *The Social Philosophers: Community and Conflict in Western Thought*, St. Albans: Paladin, 1976, p. 392.
[30] Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. by Ernest Barker, New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1958 - Book II, Chapter II, sec. 3, p. 41.

that all members of a species share a common essence and each contributes to the harmony of the cosmos by realizing their species-potentialities.[32] This teleology fortifies the places of species in the hierarchy. Women and slaves occupy an inferior place compared to men, since their nature necessitates that they obey the men of Athens. Hence, 'the relation of male to female is naturally that of the superior to the inferior' and 'a man is by nature a slave if he is capable of becoming the property of another.'[33]

Although Aristotle had opened the way to a pluralist conception of political community, it is in the seventeenth century that pluralism gained prominence, again in political philosophy, at a time when Europe was suffering from religious wars.[34] Liberalism, emerging in the last decade of the century parallel to the dissolution of feudal structures and the appearance of a modern and capitalist society, quickly adopted pluralism, which was in fact a necessity for the basic tenets of its political philosophy: equality and liberty.

II.2 Liberal Pluralism

In a general sense, liberalism is distinguished from other political philosophies by its emphasis on *individual* liberty, its skepticism of absolute authority and its secularism. John Locke's *Two Treaties of Government* which can be taken as the first systematic defense of liberal ideals is – very roughly – based on the argument that individuals have a set of natural rights to life, liberty and property that cannot be violated by any government. The strand of classical liberalism emanating from Locke focuses on the idea of limited government, the maintenance of the rule of law,

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[31] Aristotle, *Politics,* Book II, Chapter V, section. 13-4, p. 51.
[32] B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism,* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.
[33] Aristotle, *Politics,* Book I, Chapter V, sect. 7,9, p. 13.
[34] R. Nisbet, *The Social Philosophers,* p. 398.

the avoidance of arbitrary power, the sanctity of private property, and the responsibility of individuals for their own fates.[35]

Looking from a wider perspective, any theory considered to be 'liberal' generally shares the following assumptions and the following institutional/procedural underpinnings:[36]

- People in a political society must be free and equal.

This principle finds its most basic expression in the concept of 'human rights', which is a modern and secular version of natural rights. Human rights are rights to which people are entitled by virtue of being human. They are 'universal' in the sense that they belong to all humans regardless of their race, religion, gender or other characteristics. They are also 'fundamental' in the sense of being inalienable. The idea of human rights has been criticized for being too universalist, thus for ignoring the particular attachments individuals may have in virtue of the cultures, societies they belong to.

- The state's role must be defined in a way that enhances freedom and equality.

  - The state has the best chance of securing the freedom and equality of its citizens when it is organized as a democracy.

  - The state can ensure freedom when it pursues policies implementing toleration and freedom of conscience.

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[35] A. Ryan, 'Liberalism', in R. E. Goodin and P. Pettit (eds), *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 293.
[36] J. Hampton, *Political Philosophy,* Oxford: Westview, 1997, pp. 179-81 and R. Bellamy, *Liberalism And Modern Society,* Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p. 219.

- The state must stay out of the individuals' construction of their life plans.

The state's role in liberal democracies has been defined and regulated through the 'rule of law', which implies that the law should establish the framework to which all members of society, including government officials, must conform. The rule of law is the main mechanism through which the power of the state and its government is held in check. Various instruments, such as constitutions, separation of powers, checks and balances, are employed to guarantee the rule of law. On the other hand, a number of freedoms, including the freedom of expression, of association, of conscience, are codified in the constitution or other instruments of law, to secure the basic freedoms and rights of each individual. The main criticism directed to most of these rules and institutions is that they reflect the views and preferences of the privileged majority (in Western liberal democracies judges, for instance, are overwhelmingly male, white, materially privileged and relatively old).

- Any political community must be a legitimate one, which means it has to be justified to the individuals who live within it.

The main mechanism through which the consent of the individuals is sought involves voting and elections. It is generally believed that representatives-politicians can be held accountable to people through elections. Many issues concerning elections, such as whether electoral systems are really representative or not, or which electoral system is the most representative, etc., are far from over. Nevertheless, elections continue to be one of the core principles of liberal democracy.

- Reason is the tool by which the state governs. And whatever the religious, moral or metaphysical views people hold, they are expected to deal with each other in the political arena through rational argument and reasonable attitudes.

Since individuals are 'free' and 'equal' to pursue their own good and must be freed from any kind of interference while pursuing their own ends, pluralism is a necessity. Pluralism's normative significance results from liberalism's emphasis on liberty, equality and the autonomy of individuals.

II.2.i Early Liberal Pluralism

The association of pluralism with liberalism took place after the wars of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[37] Locke's attempt to reconcile the competing religious sects in Christianity and his writings on toleration also paved the way to the toleration of all difference in non-religious areas of social life and shaped contemporary liberalism's understanding of difference and pluralism. For instance, Rawls defines his project as an extension of 'the movement of thought' that began three hundred years ago with the first struggles for freedom of conscience.[38] Considering that liberalism emerged as a political philosophy seeking to provide the *individual* with certain rights against absolute authority, a special emphasis on the *individual* is clearly visible in the works of its architects. Religious, moral, cultural differences held by individuals, liberals claimed, were to be protected against state authority. This emphasis on individuality, mostly derives from the early liberals' conceptualization of the individual.

John Locke advanced the idea that men were equipped with both rights and duties; the right to mix their labor with nature, to use its products to satisfy their

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[37] G. Sartori, 'Understanding Pluralism', *Journal of Democracy*, 8:4, 1997, p. 58.
[38] J. Rawls, 'The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus', *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies*, 7:1, 1987, p.

needs, and the duty to develop natural resources to the full and to maximize the convenience of life.[39] Since men were all equipped with identical faculties, including reason, they were all equal, and equal men deserved equal respect – so did their values and conceptions of good.

Another significant name in liberal pluralism is John Stuart Mill who placed a more considerable emphasis on individuality. John Stuart Mill's theory is basically founded on the idea that the individual is the worthiest being on earth and should live a life in line with his/her status. Moreover, the individual is a 'progressive being', which means that his/her 'destiny' consists in becoming the 'highest' or the 'best thing' s/he is capable of becoming.[40] While doing this, the individual should make his/her own choices and decisions. Individuality or self-determination is the key to Mill's conception of the person. He argues that 'one whose desires and impulses are not his own has no character, no more than a steam engine has a character.'[41]

Since individuals are unique, and as 'progressive beings' should use their autonomy and individuality for being unique, diversity becomes the pivotal condition in Mill's view. For him, diversity is unavoidable and necessary as a source of richness and variety in the human world.

Mill's theory is embedded in an individualist vision of life. Differences are cherished because individuals are unique, and their uniqueness and diversity develop human potentialities, lead to progress, stimulate imagination, creativity and curiosity.[42]

In the beginning of the twentieth century, the understanding of pluralism as a normative element of liberalism, mostly identified with the idea that free and equal

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[39] J. Locke, *Two Treaties of Government,* Hamilton: McMaster University, 2000, p. 33-4.
[40] J. S. Mill, *On Liberty,* London: Penguin Books, 1985, p. 116.
[41] *Ibid.,* p. 118.

people should deliberately choose their own conceptions of good, has shifted to more empirical grounds in the United States. While keeping the normative elements of early liberal pluralism, the emerging approach mostly dealt with defining the pluralist society through some empirical hypotheses. The aim was not to justify pluralism in philosophical terms but to offer solutions to practical problems.[43]

II.2.ii American Empirical Pluralism

The debate on pluralism reached a new stage in the 1950s and 1960s, when the term gained prominence in American political science, notably with the work of Robert Dahl and David Truman. The studies of Dahl and Truman tried to examine the governmental process by treating interest groups as the primary unit of analysis. Over the next decade, this mode of analysis became known as 'analytical pluralism' or simply 'pluralism'.

American pluralists see pluralism both as an empirical fact and as a normative obligation. The pluralist picture of society is antagonistic: societies are composed of conflicting groups, each exercising the power at its disposal to further its interests.[44] They believe that conflict is inevitable in democratic societies because of the existence of a plurality of lifestyles, values and ideas. As Dahl argues: 'Whatever the explanation for conflict may be, its existence is one of the prime facts of all community life'.[45] Given this, their main concern is to make recommendations about how to maintain stability and peace in conflict-ridden societies.

In a more normative vein, pluralists emphasize pluralism's role in facilitating individual development and self-expression, and the importance of groups in

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[42] B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, pp. 40-2.
[43] A. H. Birch, *The Concept and Theories of Modern Democracy*, p. 178.
[44] F. Cunningham, *Theories Of Democracy: A Critical Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 73.
[45] R. Dahl (1967) *Pluralist Democracy In The United States of America*, cited in F. Cunningham, *Theories Of Democracy*, p. 74.

integrating the individual into society. They are not opposed to individualism as such, but they believe that the individual in a modern democracy is rather helpless. Only a group can unite the resources of individuals into an effective force.[46]

Within this perspective, then, democratic political systems are pluralistic due to the fact that they consist of many agencies with different functions and internal 'organizations', or more specifically, 'interest-groups'.[47] Interest-groups, defined as 'a standardized pattern of interaction rather than as a collection of human units'[48], are seen to be at the heart of the policy-making processes.[49] The concept of 'interest' is crucial in this context. By this, pluralists mean 'subjective interests'. Hence interest groups include business organizations, trade unions, politically active religious or ethnic associations and so on. Only institutionally represented groups are included and structural groups such as economic classes or people possessing interests of which they might be unaware (for instance, in terms of gender or race) are excluded.[50]

The main thrust behind American pluralism was empirical.[51] For pluralists, the relative importance of groups in the shaping of policy was an empirical question. This was the background to Robert Dahl's influential study *Who Governs?* which was undertaken in New Haven. In this study, Dahl sought to undermine the findings of a number of surveys on community power structures which reached the conclusion that power within American cities was at the hands of an established elite or upper-class citizens.[52] This explanation, Dahl argued, which had both a 'left' and a

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[46] R. Dahl, *Who Governs?,* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989, p. 5.
[47] R. Alford and R. Friedland, *Powers of Theory,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 125.
[48] F. Cunningham, *Theories Of Democracy*, p. 74.
[49] F. Cunningham, *Theories Of Democracy*, p. 181.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] A. H. Birch, *The Concept and Theories of Modern Democracy*, p. 180.
[52] A. H. Birch, *The Concept and Theories of Modern Democracy,* p. 182.

'right' interpretation, 'asserts that beneath the façade of democratic politics a social and economic elite will usually be found actually running things'.[53]

Dahl concentrated on the decision-making process in New Haven. His central method was to determine for each decision which participants had initiated alternatives that were finally adopted, or had proposed alternatives that were turned down. The final decisions were then categorized as individual 'successes' or 'defeats'. The participants with the greatest proportion of successes were considered to be the most influential.[54]

Dahl's main conclusion is that in a democratic community access to sources of power is widely dispersed. More specifically, in the old system of New Haven

> political resources were marked by a cumulative inequality: when one individual was much better off than another in one resource, such as wealth, he was usually better off in almost every other resource – social standing, legitimacy, control over religious and educational institutions... In the political system of today, inequalities in political resources remain, but they tend to be *noncumulative*. The political system of New Haven, then, is one of *dispersed inequalities*.[55]

What the pluralist thesis implies then is that the decision-making process is not dominated by a single elite, but rather a multiplicity of relatively small groups. Not everyone possesses the same resources of influence, but the failure to possess any particular resource does not prevent the possessing of others. More importantly, the resources which are effective in one policy domain may not be so in other policy areas. In other words, political influence cannot be easily transferred from one policy area to another.[56]

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[53] R. Dahl, *Who Governs?*, p. 6.
[54] S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, London and New York: Macmillan, 1974.
[55] R. Dahl, *Who Governs?*, p. 85. My emphasis.
[56] D. Baskin, 'American Pluralism: Theory, Practice and Ideology', *Journal of Politics*, 32:1, 1970, p. 75.

As this brief discussion shows, pluralists are opposed to what they consider simplistic or reductionist accounts of political life such as elitism and Marxism. Dahl notes in *Who Governs?* that 'within a century a political system dominated by one cohesive set of leaders had given way to a system dominated by many different sets of leaders, each having access to a different combination of political resources'.[57] This was, in short, a pluralist system. Economic classes played only a subordinate role in such a system, as one among several variables which could influence politics.[58] Yet Dahl admitted that the pluralist system was 'a long way from achieving the goal of political equality advocated by the philosophers of democracy'.[59]

American pluralism has been widely criticized in the following decades. The most persistent criticisms of pluralism came from the political left and focused on its empirical claim that power in the US is widely dispersed.[60] The critics argue that pluralists overlooked the severe inequalities in resources and power in American society and assumed mistakenly that the system was self-correcting. They were also said to believe that all important interests and opinions were represented in the political system or that all groups had equal access to the policy-making process.[61]

Secondly, as noted earlier, pluralists had a narrow definition of 'interest groups', and excluded economic classes or groups that are not organized in terms of their subjective interests from their research agenda.[62] Hence pluralism lacks

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[57] R. Dahl, *Who Governs?*, p. 86.
[58] J. F. Manley, 'Neo-Pluralism: A Class Analysis of Pluralism I and Pluralism II', *American Political Science Review*, 77:2, 1983, pp. 368-70 and 382.
[59] R. Dahl, *Who Governs?*, p. 86.
[60] F. Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy*, p. 86.
[61] J. F. Manley, 'Neo-Pluralism: A Class Anaysis of Pluralism I and Pluralism II', pp. 370-6.
[62] F. Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy*, p. 74.

resources, it was argued, for addressing conflicts that arise from ethnic or religious differences which divide entire populations.[63]

Finally, some critics argued that pluralists tended to equate elite bargaining and negotiation with politics. This led them to disregard the politics of those who are excluded from the interest group universe and victimized by it.[64] In other words, pluralists lost sight of what is essential to politics, namely the articulation of some 'public good' and instead concerned themselves with empirical studies which served to promote private interests.[65]

Although empirical pluralism had been a significant turning point in terms of the methodology used, it did not put an end to normative discussions of pluralism. American pluralists, it was mainly argued, did constrain the scope of political analysis by depending too much on observable data and overlooking the normative and critical dimension of political philosophy. Robert Dahl's focus on concrete, observable behavior in his study of power has been severely criticized by Steven Lukes who calls this model 'the one-dimensional view of power'. The focus on observable behavior, Lukes argues, leads the pluralists to study decision-making as the central process. And decisions involve actual and observable conflict. This is quite problematic according to Lukes as the pluralists cannot account for the operation of power in the absence of conflict.[66] Moreover, pluralists assume that interests are to be understood as policy preferences. Thus a conflict of interests is equivalent to a conflict of preferences. They do not consider the possibility that

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[63] F. Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy*, p. 82.
[64] D. Baskin, 'American Pluralism: Theory, Practice and Ideology', p. 71.
[65] F. Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy*, p. 87.
[66] S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, pp. 13-14.

interests might be unarticulated or unobservable, or that people might in fact be mistaken be about their own interests.[67]

The critics also argued that the procedural and practical solutions offered by American pluralists were attempts to correct the deficits of liberal regimes, not to criticize or offer alternative normative models against it. Some critics even argued that the pluralist view of society drawn by these pluralists was nothing but an apology for the liberal capitalist system. It was maintained that they were simply reproducing the bias of the system they were studying:

> The diversity and openness Dahl sees may be highly misleading if power is being exercised within the system to limit decision-making to acceptable issues ... Dahl concludes that the system is penetrable by any dissatisfied group, but he does so only by studying cases of successful penetration, and never examines failed attempts at such penetration... In brief, the one-dimensional view of power cannot reveal the less visible ways in which a pluralist system may be biased in favour of certain groups and against others.[68]

The practical solutions American pluralists offered to problems neither silenced the discontented voices of unobservable and uninstitutionalized groups within society nor brought cultural equality and recognition. Dissatisfaction with this empiricist view revived the normative questions and discussions concerning how to conceptualize differences within society, how to cope with them. Leading figures in these discussions were John Rawls and Isaiah Berlin, who form the normative track of liberal theory after the 1970s. Their common adhesion to normative theory notwithstanding, Berlin and Rawls differ in their conception of diversity in societies. Diversity in Rawls is acknowledged as a 'fact' that could be significantly altered only through 'the employment of unacceptable degrees of state coercion, with unacceptable levels of civil strife'.[69] For Berlin, diversity is an 'intrinsic value',

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[67] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[68] *Ibid.*, pp. 36-7
[69] W. A. Galston, *Liberal Pluralism,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 27.

which is subjected to a thin moral code of liberalism. This argument can appeal to the necessarily diverse experiences and standpoints within a complex social structure and to the desirability of public institutions that conduce to the expression, rather than the homogenization of these differences.[70] Berlin and Rawls also differ in terms of the inspirations of their theory: whereas Rawls is inspired from Kantian philosophy, Berlin is post-reformist. Nevertheless, their conceptions of pluralism are individual-based and involve a hierarchy of values – explicitly in Rawls, implicitly in Berlin.

II.2.iii Reasonable Pluralism and John Rawls

John Rawls, in his book *A Theory of Justice*[71] which had a considerable influence on the debates in political philosophy after its publication in 1971, is primarily interested in how to realize the conditions of existence for justice in contemporary societies. His *Political Liberalism*[72] revolves around the same thesis. In both books, rejecting metaphysical and utilitarian theories, Rawls tries to found his theory on a pure political conception of justice, which is 'a moral conception worked out for a specific kind of subject, namely for political, social and economic institutions', which is not derived from a 'comprehensive doctrine'[73], and whose content 'is expressed in terms of certain fundamental ideas seen as implicit in the political culture of a democratic society.'[74] In this way, Rawls was also able to provide an alternative to widely criticized liberal economic market model in the form of a more equitable principle of distributive justice.

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[70] *Ibid.*
[71] J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.
[72] J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.
[73] By which Rawls means any philosophy that includes a conception of good life.
[74] J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism,* pp. 11-14.

The importance of Rawls lies in his role in bringing the normative back to political science which was heavily dominated by empirical studies in the aftermath of World War II. Rawls is aware that any society involves a plurality of 'comprehensive doctrines' which conflict with each other. According to Rawls, a conception is fully comprehensive if it covers all recognized values and virtues within one rather precisely articulated system. And he asserts that comprehensive doctrines of all kinds – religious, philosophical and moral – belong to what we may call the 'background culture' of society. And for him, this is the culture of the social, not the political.[75]

Rawls defends a model of society in which these conflicting doctrines can unite around a number of principles of justice. As he tries to unite competing comprehensive doctrines around basic principles of justice, he implicitly sets out a model of pluralism, and procedures to deal with the differences in society. That made him, a significant target of the criticisms raised against contemporary liberal pluralism.

II.2.iii.a Rawls's Theory of Justice: Justice as Fairness

For Rawls

> The conditions for a fair agreement on the principles of political justice between free and equal persons must eliminate the bargaining advantages that inevitably arise within the background institutions of any society from cumulative social, historical, and natural tendencies.[76]

Rawls's solution to this problem is his 'modeling' instrument, which he calls the 'original position'. The concept of 'original position' is an extension of the tradition of 'social contract' theory. The proponents of this theory like Locke, and Hobbes

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[75] *Ibid.*, p. 14.
[76] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-5.

defined the actual political order as an outcome of negotiation between individuals living in a pre-political condition. What distinguishes the Rawlsian 'original position' from those of Hobbes or Locke is that in Rawls's 'original position' people are behind a 'veil of ignorance', which prevents them from knowing their social status, capabilities, conceptions of good, economic and social conditions, religion, sex or ethnicity. Since people will be unaware of their personal interests, none of them will be more advantageous than others, thus, the determination of the principles of justice will be just and fair.

Rawls argues that in the original position, people behind the veil of ignorance will agree on two principles of justice, with the first given priority over the second, which are supposed to regulate the basic institutions of society:

> A. Each person has an equal claim to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with the same scheme for all; and in this scheme the equal political liberties, and only those liberties, are to be guaranteed their fair value. (Liberty principle)

> B. Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they are to be attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity; and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged members of society. (Difference principle)[77]

With the help of these two principles, Rawls aims to formulate an 'egalitarian' form of liberalism which guarantees 'the fair value of the political liberties' and the 'fair equality of opportunity' to the benefit of the least advantaged members of society.[78] These principles of justice may be shared by all citizens and can be a 'basis of a reasoned, informed, and willing political agreement, which expresses their shared and political reason'.[79] By an 'overlapping consensus', citizens who remain deeply

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[77] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.
[78] *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.
[79] *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

divided on religious or philosophical doctrines can maintain a just and stable society.[80] Rawls calls this conception of justice 'justice as fairness'.

II.2.iii.b Reasonable Citizens and Reasonable Doctrines

Rawls's theory of justice as fairness is based on the assumption that individuals have two moral powers: 'a capacity for a sense of justice', which is 'the capacity to understand, to apply and to act from the public conception of justice which characterizes the fair terms of cooperation' and 'a capacity for a conception of the good' which implies the capacity to determine 'what is valuable in human life'.[81] People in the original position possess these two moral powers and decide according to these, which means they behave, in a sense rationally, although they are unaware of their social and economic conditions and preferences. Rawls's pluralism takes citizens as the unit of analysis, not people as bearers of social and economic roles, or 'comprehensive doctrines'. By a comprehensive doctrine, Rawls means any kind of conception of good life: comprehensive doctrines are 'conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole.'[82]

Reasonableness is the measure of whether citizens or comprehensive doctrines are appropriate or not for Rawls's just society. Citizens are reasonable when they see one another as free and equal in a system of cooperation over generations and they are prepared to offer one another fair terms of social cooperation.[83] Rawls claims that reasonable people hold reasonable comprehensive doctrines. And a reasonable comprehensive doctrine 'covers the major religious, philosophical, and moral aspects

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[80] *Ibid.*
[81] *Ibid.,* pp. 19-20.
[82] *Ibid.,* p. 175.
[83] *Ibid.,* pp. 49, 54, 58.

of human life in a more or less consistent and coherent manner' and 'it tends to evolve over time in the light of what it sees as good and sufficient reasons.'[84]

As noted above, Rawls argues that reasonable people holding reasonable comprehensive doctrines will inevitably unite around the principles of justice; in other words, their reasonableness will help them to form an 'overlapping consensus', in which a diversity of conflicting comprehensive doctrines endorse the same political conception, justice as fairness:

> Such a consensus consists of all the reasonable opposing religious, philosophical, and moral doctrines likely to persist over generations and to gain a sizable body of adherents in a more or less just constitutional regime, a regime in which the criterion of justice is that political conception itself.[85]

His overlapping consensus is not a strategic compromise, rather it is a principled agreement in which both sides accept the resulting principles as morally legitimate, albeit for different reasons that appeal to their different conceptions of the self or society. Since both sides will view it as legitimate, the agreement will be stable, and will not depend on maintaining any particular balance of power between the groups. If one group gains more power in society, Rawls argues, it will not seek to break the agreement.[86] But his idea of the overlapping consensus is limited to the holders of reasonable doctrines within the society.

> History tells a plurality of not unreasonable comprehensive doctrines. That these comprehensive doctrines are divergent makes an overlapping consensus necessary. That they are not unreasonable makes it possible.[87]

If the idea of an overlapping consensus will be the cornerstone of Rawls's solution to the different and conflicting comprehensive doctrines within societies, then the scope

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[84] *Ibid.*, pp. 59-61.
[85] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[86] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 223.
[87] J. Rawls, 'The Domain of the Political and Overlapping Consensus', in R. E. Goodin and P. Pettit (eds), *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, p. 279.

of his pluralism is limited to reasonable citizens and their reasonable doctrines. He excludes what he calls unreasonable individuals, unreasonable doctrines, those who reject the 'essentials' of democratic society and those who refuse the principles of justice that he considers as constitutive of a just society:

> The excluded or marginalized group is thus fairly large and covers not only the fascists, the racists and the fundamentalists but also sexists, conservative critics of liberal democracy and those with strong religious convictions. It also includes some groups of Marxists who, though wedded ideas of freedom and equality, believe that the capitalist society undermines them ... Unless these and other groups are clearly defined and distinguished, Rawls's society runs the danger of arbitrarily blocking out large areas of dissent and creating pockets of deep discontent. [88]

II.2.iii.c Reasonable Pluralism and the 'Burdens of Judgement'

In the light of these, how can we define Rawls's pluralism? First, Rawls's pluralism is a reasonable one, which includes the idea that consensus can be reached between reasonable citizens and their comprehensive doctrines or worldviews. His pluralism is also a hierarchical pluralism with reasonableness and justice placed at the top:

> The crucial fact is not the fact of pluralism as such, but of reasonable pluralism ... The fact of reasonable pluralism is not an unfortunate condition of human life, as we might say of pluralism as such, allowing for doctrines that are not only irrational but mad and aggressive... [The fact of reasonable pluralism is] itself the outcome of the free exercise of free human reason under conditions of liberty.[89]

Although Rawls admits that comprehensive doctrines can be contradictory, he uses reason and reasonableness as a mediating tool. For instance, he argues that reasonableness forces people to accept the 'facts of pluralism' or what he calls, 'burdens of judgement', recognizing that even reasonable people might arrive at different and conflicting judgements. For Rawls, burdens of judgement are the results of the 'conflicting nature and complexity of evidence', 'differences about weighting

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[88] B. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, p. 87

of considerations', 'vagueness of concepts', 'disparate experiences of diverse people' or 'different kinds of normative consideration of different force on both sides of an issue'.[90]

Rawls argues that in a modern society with its numerous positions and offices, its various divisions of labor, and its many social groups, citizens' total experiences are different enough for their judgement to diverge on many cases.[91] But reasonable people do not seek to impose their conceptions of good life or doctrines upon others considering the 'constitutional essentials' and the 'basic structure of society':

> As rational we have to balance our various ends and estimate their appropriate place ,in our way of life... On the other hand, as reasonable we must asses the strength of peoples' claims, not only against our claims but against one another, or on our common practices and institutions.[92]

As citizens are free and equal, they have an equal share in the corporate political and coercive power of society and all are equally subject to the burdens of judgement. Hence, there is no reason why any citizen should have the right to use the state's power to decide constitutional essentials or questions of justice as that citizens' comprehensive doctrines dictates.[93] Then, since everyone accepts the facts of pluralism and the burdens of judgement, Rawlsian society based upon political liberalism will be stable.

The vital shortcoming of Rawls's political liberalism is that this stability can only be achieved if the content of the competing 'comprehensive doctrines' is consistent with the ideals of political liberalism, namely his two principles of justice. Reasonableness can be a hazardous concept when all conceptions of good that

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[89] J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 144.
[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 56-7.
[91] *Ibid.*, p. 57.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 56.
[93] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-2.

challenge political liberalism's basic liberties are regarded as unreasonable and are to be excluded.[94]

The idea of reasonableness originates from the Enlightenment's reliance on reason. Rawls is also a follower of the Enlightenment tradition. In a famous sentence, Rawls remarks that 'the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it', which refers to the idea that the self is prior to its socially given roles and relations, and is capable of judging them in the light of the dictates of reason.[95]

This emphasis on 'universal reason' was criticized and accused of creating a 'drive to generality' demanding citizens to transcend their differences and act on the basis of a common interest or general will. In order to achieve this consensus or common will, a sharp distinction occurs in liberal thought between public space and private space, the former signifying the normative reason and the political, the latter difference, particularity and the non-political.[96]

This is the second weakness of Rawlsian pluralism: a sharp distinction between public and private matters. In his view, 'comprehensive doctrines of all kinds — religious, philosophical, and moral — belong to what we may call 'the background culture of civil society. *This is culture of the social, not the political.*'[97] Limiting the scope of political issues to the basics of society — that is, society's main social and economic institutions — Rawls ignores any kind of ethnic, cultural or sexual difference, which has no visibility in public space.

Given these weaknesses, particularly the emphasis on reason and reasonableness, it can be concluded that Rawls's pluralism will be unable to deal with the demands of many of the current advocates of difference and diversity. Does

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[94] A. T. Baumeister, 'Two Liberalisms and the Politics of Difference', *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 3:3, 1998.
[95] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy,* p. 221.
[96] I. M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

this then imply that all forms of liberal pluralism lack the resources necessary to cope with the challenge of cultural diversity? To answer this question, the second major form of pluralism within liberal theory, Isaiah Berlin's value-pluralism, needs to be examined.

II.2. iv Value Pluralism and Isaiah Berlin

Value pluralism has been understood as the thesis that in the universe there are many values which cannot be reduced to a single value. The general claim of value pluralism is that values or, more specifically, the conceptions of goods and ways of life cannot be compared or ranked by a common measure, which means that they are, in fact, incommensurable.[98] Value pluralism became a widely discussed topic and had led to a number of debates concerning its relation to liberalism. Significant questions have been raised in this context such as whether value-pluralism and liberalism are compatible or not, or assuming that value pluralism is true, whether it undermines liberalism or not.[99] A leading figure in this debate is John Gray who argues that value-pluralism defeats liberal political morality. For him, none of the values taken to be constitutive of liberalism –for instance negative liberty or individual autonomy – can have general priority if it is true that the central goods specified by different political moralities are incommensurable.[100] Moreover liberal institutions cannot be a standard of legitimacy by reference to which all regimes are to be assessed. They are merely one variety of *modus vivendi,* not always the most legitimate: 'where liberal institutions claim universal authority, liberals and pluralists

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[97] J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 14. My emphasis.
[98] A. Gutmann, 'Liberty and Pluralism in Pursuit of the Non-Ideal', *Social Research*, 66:4, 1999, p. 1041 and J. Gray, 'Where Pluralists and Liberals Part Company', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 6:1, 1998, pp. 20-1.
[99] A. Baumeister, 'Two Liberalisms and the Politics of Difference'; J. Gray, 'Where Pluralists and Liberals Part Company'; A. Gutmann, 'Liberty and Pluralism in the Pursuit of the Non-Ideal'; J. Crowder, 'Pluralism And Liberalism'; W. A. Galston, *Liberal Pluralism*.
[100] J. Gray, 'Where Pluralists and Liberals Part Company', pp. 27-31.

must part company'.[101] Isaiah Berlin, however, claims that value-pluralism and liberalism are compatible. This section will offer a brief overview of his liberal interpretation of value-pluralism.

In his essay 'The Originality of Machiavelli', Berlin defines monism as 'the idea of the world and human society as a single intelligible structure' in which 'truth was one, error multiple; the true answers must of necessity be universal and immutable'.[102] He mainly attributed monism to eighteenth-century rationalists, to whom he was first drawn when he was studying Marx, though the idea goes back to Plato.[103] Against monism, Berlin argues that 'human beings do not actually possess knowledge of a harmonious moral universe, the moral universe is not harmonious and its constituent values are not commensurable'.[104] So far, Berlin's arguments and his definition of value pluralism appear to be relativist. Nevertheless, in most of his writings Berlin stresses that he is not a relativist and his understanding of pluralism is subject to certain limits. His insistence on liberty as a fundamental ideal of pluralism distinguishes Berlin from relativism and other interpretations of value pluralism. The implicit idea behind this is that the incommensurability of values or goods, that is to say moral pluralism, does not disparage moral realism (the difference between the goods and the evils). In this sense we may not be able to rationally decide between liberty and equality; they may be incommensurable. But liberty and slavery are not. Berlin writes:

> I came to the conclusion that there is a plurality of ideals, as there is a plurality of cultures and of temperaments. I am not a relativist; I do not say 'I like my coffee with milk and you like it without; I am in favor of kindness and you prefer concentration camps' – each of us

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[101] *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[102] D. Kelly, 'The Political Thought of Isaiah Berlin', p. 29.
[103] *Ibid.*
[104] Berlin's value-pluralism rejects the Enlightenment goal of gradual convergence upon a universally shared set of liberal values by emphasizing the plurality of values. A. Gutmann, 'Liberty and Pluralism in Pursuit of the Non-Ideal', pp. 1042-3; A. Baumeister, 'Two Liberalisms and the Politics

with his own values, which cannot be overcome or integrated. This I believe to be false. But I do believe that there is a plurality of values which men can and do seek, and that these values differ. [105]

In order to place his pluralism in a non-relativist perspective, Berlin argues that values are limited and objective. They are objective because they are part of the essence of humanity rather than 'arbitrary creations of men's subjective fancies'.[106] As values are part of the essence of humanity, with *sufficient imagination* people can enter into the value systems of others and understand them even if they are opposed to their values. In his view, one can detest Nazi values, but one can understand how, 'given enough misinformation, enough false belief about reality, one could come to believe that they are the only salvation.'[107]

Another point against relativism is that there is an implicit hierarchy of values in Berlin's understanding of pluralism. His pluralism is constrained by two sets of values: individual liberty and avoidance of human suffering. In his famous essay 'Two Concepts of Liberty', he argues that personal freedom is not replaceable:

> We must preserve a minimum area of personal freedom if we are not to 'degrade or deny our nature'. We cannot remain absolutely free and must give up some of our liberty to preserve the rest. But total self-surrender is self-defeating. What then must the minimum be? That which a man cannot give up without offending against the essence of his human nature.[108]

Here what Berlin refers to as personal freedom is his conception of 'negative liberty', which can be understood as the capacity of individuals, unimpeded by external coercion or constraint, to choose for themselves among competing conceptions of goods or valuable lives. The basis of his notion of 'negative liberty' is the absence of

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of Difference'; J. Crowder, 'Pluralism And Liberalism'.

[105] I. Berlin, 'The First and the Last', *New York Review of Books,* XLV:8, 1998.

[106] *Ibid.*

[107] *Ibid.*

[108] I. Berlin, 'Two Concepts of Liberty', in I. Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty,* London and New York: Oxford University Press, p. 126.

external coercion and interference. He argues that 'the fundamental sense of freedom is freedom from chains, from imprisonment, from enslavement, by others. The rest is an extension of this sense, or else metaphor'[109] and continues that 'I am normally said to be free to the degree to which no man or body of men interferes with my activity. Political liberty in this sense is simply the area within which a man can act unobstructed by others'.[110] Unfreedom occurs when individuals are coerced to remain within ways of life they wish to leave. The politics of negative liberty, then, consists in seeking to protect their ability to leave, in a sense to choose among alternatives.[111]

Another principle constraining the incommensurability of values is the avoidance of suffering. Berlin writes that the 'first public obligation is to avoid extremes of suffering.' His defense of the avoidance of suffering is on moral grounds: societies are obliged to relieve human suffering because it is inhumane and indecent. On the contrary, his defense of freedom is on conceptual grounds for he claims that being free is conceptually inseparable from living a human life. For Berlin, a truly human life is being conscious of one's freedom.[112]

Berlin's political thought is also characterized by a skepticism of the Enlightenment and its 'universal reason', which also supports his theory of value-pluralism. He writes:

> To hold that, when I act and live in the light of certain values, this is not because they are made or discovered by the reason that is present in all fully developed men, and therefore guaranteed by it, and universally valid for all creatures. No: I do indeed live by such values, not because they are universal, but because they are my own, express my particular inner nature, the particular vision of the universe that belongs to me.[113]

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[109] *Ibid.*, p. vi.
[110] *Ibid.*, p. 120.
[111] W. A. Galston, *Liberal Pluralism*, p. 51.
[112] A. Gutmann, 'Liberty and Pluralism in the Pursuit of the Non-Ideal', pp. 1050-1.
[113] I. Berlin, 'Kant as an Unfamiliar Source of Nationalism', in Henry Hardy (ed.), *The Sense of Reality*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp. 242-3, cited in D. Kelly, 'The Political Thought of Isaiah Berlin', pp. 42-3.

Berlin takes one step further and argues that Kant's 'choosing self' who is a mature and rational individual can easily mutate into some supra-individual identity like the state, acting in the true interests of individuals. His point is that a priori reasoning can take irrational and dangerous directions. [114] This is also why he suggests that the pursuit of the ideal is dangerous. In his view, the greatest political injustices have been realized through the pursuit of an ideal: 'the only path to salvation, the final solution, a classless society, the preservation of the nation above all else'.[115] He objects to any pursuit of an ideal which, for him, forcibly, violently, would try to reshape a messy and complex world to accord with an ideological plan or a vision of uniformity.[116]

It is clear that the pluralism of Isaiah Berlin is different from that of Rawls. For Rawls, the plurality of values and ways of life is a fact that needs to be coped with; on the contrary, Berlin sees difference and the plurality of differences as an intrinsic value. While Rawls puts greater emphasis on justice and reasonableness, Berlin stresses freedom and the avoidance of suffering. Although Berlin appreciates the commitment of Enlightenment philosophers to individual freedom, he believes that in the final analysis individual freedom is incompatible with the Enlightenment ideal of 'universal reason' since it brings up the attempt to make humanity conform to a single truth.[117] He argues that

> [t]he romantics have dealt a fatal blow to the proposition that, all appearances to the contrary, a definite solution of the jigsaw puzzle is, at least in principle, possible, that

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[114] *Ibid.*
[115] I. Berlin, 'The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West', *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas,* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991, p.48, cited in D. Kelly, 'The Political Thought of Isaiah Berlin', p. 42-3.
[116] J. T. Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear,* New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 107.
[117] A. Baumeister, 'Two Liberalisms and the Politics of Difference', p. 316.

power in the service of reason can achieve it, that rational organization can bring about the perfect union of such values and counter-values as individual liberty and social equality.[118]

Rawls aims to create an ideal and just society in which justice is the most fundamental virtue, which is to be achieved with the help of reason; on the contrary, Berlin is explicitly skeptical of the pursuit of an ideal society as he believes that the pursuit of any ideal encourages authoritarianism:

> Someone once remarked that in the old days men and women were brought as sacrifices to a variety of gods; for these, the modern age has substituted the new idols: isms. To cause pain, to kill, to torture are in general rightly condemned; but if these things are done not for my personal benefit but for an ism – socialism, nationalism, fascism ... – then they are in order. Most revolutionaries believe, covertly or overtly, that in order to create the ideal world, eggs must be broken, otherwise, one cannot obtain an omelette. Eggs are certainly broken ... but the omelette is far to seek, it recedes into an infinite distance.[119]

In the light of these, Berlin's value-pluralism, which is mainly based on his conception of negative liberty, can be said to provide a perspective more sensitive to differences than Rawls's reasonable pluralism. If we follow John Gray, his value-pluralism can even be read as an argument against the hegemony of liberalism or any other political philosophy. Since it accepts that values and goods in life are incommensurable, it provides the background for a recognition of cultural differences. Moreover, considering Berlin's skepticism with regard to the pursuit of an ideal society, we can argue that value-pluralism inevitably leads to the need for a plurality of associations and authorities in social life, as confiding in one would lead to authoritarianism.

The discussion so far enables us to identify four main ideas which underpin liberal pluralism:

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[118] I. Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity,* p. 2367, cited in *ibid.*
[119] I. Berlin, 'The First and the Last'.

- The first of these ideas is *individualism*. The classical liberal belief in the uniqueness and the fundamental equality of each individual gives rise to the ideal of a society in which the values and beliefs of all individuals will be protected at all costs.

- This is closely related to the second idea underlying liberal pluralism, namely a firm confidence in the autonomy of the individual. Drawing on the Enlightenment belief in reason, liberal theory assumes that the individual is rational: it has the ability to comprehend the world through the exercise of reason. Thus, individuals are the best judges of their interests and have a capacity to choose what is good for themselves among various alternatives – hence a capacity for 'self-determination'.

- The choices of the self-determining individuals – hence a plurality of ways of life, of values, etc. – can only be guaranteed if there is *liberty and equality*. Individuals should be free to pursue whatever they think is good for themselves, without any constraints by others, including the state.

- *The claim to universality* is the fourth idea that underpins liberal pluralism. Liberalism, which represents a particular geography and a particular set of values, claims to be universally valid. Here we witness the evolution of a particularist philosophy to universalism.[120]

Going back to Rawls and Berlin, it is possible to notice that, despite their differences, they converge on a number of points. They both are individualist and they both have universalistic assumptions concerning the nature of the individual. Rawls for instance attributes universal reason to individuals under the guise of reasonableness, whereas

Berlin identifies a universal human essence. We can thus say that the idea of group or community rights, or the notion of an individual which does not have an essence outside communal relations comes to the fore only in the 1980s. It is in this context that the communitarian critique of liberalism is significant.

II.3 Communitarian Pluralism

The political discourse after 1980s is marked by the rise of cultural pluralism and identity politics, which challenges the earlier liberal pluralism and its fundamental assumptions. Today, liberal democracies are confronted with demands for recognition and the protection of cultural differences, arising from a critique of the existing political culture which was supposed to be representative of differences and in agreement on basic values − and in which power was supposed to be diffused. Liberal theory, bedeviled by the plurality of cultures and the critiques of alternative political frameworks − expectations of minority and religious groups, indigenous peoples, gays, lesbians, women, working class and so on − is in quest of solutions.

The most sustained critique of liberal democratic pluralism in the last two decades has been provided by a series of thinkers − Michael Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Walzer, Charles Taylor − who are grouped together under the label 'communitarianism'.[121] Prioritizing the community as a value over equality and liberty, communitarians accused liberals of being too neutral to community and communal values and of putting too much emphasis on individuality and rights.

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[120] E. Laclau, *Evrensellik, Kimlik ve Özgürleşme,* İstanbul: Birikim, 1996, p. 78-9.
[121] After 1980s, despite minor differences in their conceptions of political, these authors constituted the body of this new type of critique. M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982; A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* London: Duckworth, 1985; C. Taylor, *Philosophical Papers II,* Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985; M. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice,* New York: Basic Books, 1983.

It needs to be stated at this point that communitarianism is not a monolithic school of thought. There are significant differences between the thinkers who are commonly considered as communitarian. Michael Sandel for instance lays special emphasis on the 'constitutive attachements' which form the self and its choice of ends. Alasdair MacIntyre focuses more on communal practices and traditions, arguing that communal membership is integral to the possibility of attaining any human good. Charles Taylor, on the other hand, emphasizes membership of a linguistic community: for him, human beings are self-interpreting animals, and the languages they need to this end are social phenomena. In that respect, community is a precondition of human agency. Finally, Michael Walzer maintains that the meanings of the goods for which any theory of justice must establish distributive principles cannot be understood independently of the specific socio-cultural contexts within which they are produced.[122] Despite these differences, it is possible to group all these thinkers under the umbrella of communitarianism as they all seek to bring community back to liberal political theory.

Interestingly, the idea that political philosophy must take shared practices and communal values of different societies into account is not a contemporary claim and communitarians are not the first who accused liberalism of sacrificing community in the name of individuality. First, this communitarian emphasis on community can be found in Hegel's critique of classical liberal theory while he is distinguishing between *Moralität* and *Sittlichkeit*. Hegel radically criticizes Kant who attempted to found a philosophy on the basis of a universal conception of human needs and rationality. For Hegel, this ahistorical conception of the human being is too abstract and too individualistic. As an alternative approach, he offers *Sittlichkeit* in which the

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[122] S. Mulhall and A. Swift, *Liberals & Communitarians*, 2nd edn, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, pp. 160-4.

identity of individuals and their capacity for moral agency depend on the communities they belong to and the particular political and social roles they occupy in those communities.[123]

Second, Marx and his critique of liberal society influenced the communitarians' diagnosis of the contemporary liberal society. As Michael Walzer puts it: 'The writings of the young Marx represent one of the early appearances of communitarian criticism and his argument first made in the 1840s, is powerfully present today.'[124] In his *Early Writings* young Marx defines the individual in liberal society as

> [a]n individual separated from the community, withdrawn into himself, wholly preoccupied with his private interest and acting in accordance with his private caprice. The only bond between men is natural necessity, need and private interest.[125]

Parallel to this, the communitarian emphasis on community implies that liberalism creates an 'asocial individualism' in which society is reduced to the coexistence of isolated selves liberated from all connections, without common values, traditions or history.[126] Although communitarianism and Marxism share a common ground in their critique of liberal societies, they differ on some important points. Whereas in Marxism community is something that can be achieved by a revolutionary change in society — by the elimination of capitalism and the building of a socialist society — communitarians argue that community does not need to be built *de novo* but rather needs to be valorized and protected.[127]

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[123] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 209.
[124] M. Walzer, 'The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', *Political Theory*, 18:1, February 1990, p. 8.
[125] K. Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *Early Writings,* ed. by T. B. Bottomore, New York: McGraw Hill, 1963, p.26, cited in M. Walzer, 'The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', p. 8.
[126] M. Walzer, 'The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', p. 8.
[127] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy,* p. 209.

Hence, drawing on Hegel and Marx, communitarianism takes community as a starting point. Community and communal values constitute the basis of not only communitarian perception of the political but also its perception of the individual, society and pluralism.

Problematizing the liberal conception of self and society, communitarianism puts forward an understanding of pluralism that emphasizes the common will, shared values and particularities of each community. It rejects universalism and focuses on the particularities of each culture as well as the particularities of each community within these cultures.

These communitarian claims mentioned above can be detailed as follows:

- Liberalism's conception of self is inadequate and flawed for it takes people distinct from their ends, communal values and culture.

- The liberal model of society is that of 'asocial individualism' for liberalism assumes that people are selfish or egoist, and ignores the binding influence of communal values on individuals.

- The underlying tendency of liberalism towards universality is difference-blind. Each culture and community has its own particularities which cannot be explained or regulated by universal ideals.

- The liberal idea of minimalist or neutral state cannot protect community's way of life. State or any political authority should be a *perfectionist* one in order to protect either the common good of the society or different ways of life, and different goods of communities within society.

II.3.i   The Conception of Self

The first objection of the communitarians to liberalism concerns *the conception of self* within liberal theory. Communitarians argue that for liberals the individual is prior to the community due to the fact that any individual is free to question or reject any communal relation or value. This conception of self originates from the Kantian view that 'the self is prior to the ends which are affirmed by it'.[128] In this view, the self is seen as prior to its socially given roles and relations, and is free only if it is capable of holding the features of its social situation at a distance and judging them according to the dictates of reason.[129] Communitarians believe that the self defined by liberalism is an emptied one or what they call an 'unencumbered self'.[130]

Contrary to this view, communitarians argue that people are embedded in social roles and relationships. Rather than taking group practices or communities as the product of individual choices, they claim that individuals are the product of *social practices* or communities.[131] Their *self* is not prior to its ends or social practices, on the contrary it is 'embedded' or 'situated' in existing social practices.

Michael Sandel's book *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*[132] first published in 1982, is mainly based on this argument. In this book, Sandel's criticisms are straightly directed to Rawls's theory of justice and the author devotes himself to a close examination of Rawls's works, trying to demonstrate that Rawls is mistaken in his conceptualization of the self and society. He argues that liberals, notably Rawls,

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[128] J. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 560.
[129] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 221.
[130] M. Sandel, 'The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self', in R. Goodin and P. Pettit (eds), *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1997, pp. 247-51.
[131] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 336-7.
[132] M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*.

not only ignore how the self is situated or embedded in community, but also ignore

that sometimes people cannot choose their ends deliberately, they are born into it.[133]

People's values and identities are shaped within society, while they are

performing their *social roles,* rather than outside the social structure. Alasdair

MacIntyre, for instance, argues that nobody is simply a pure individual, rather people

approach their circumstances as bearers of certain identities, being someone's son or

daughter, a citizen of some country, a member of a profession.[134] Taylor makes a

similar argument, arguing that identity is constructed in relation to society and other

identities within society. He claims,

> our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence ... the genesis of human mind is
> not monological, not something each person accomplishes on his or her own, but dialogical.
> We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things
> our significant others want to see in us.[135]

Identity, Taylor argues, does not come into being in a vacuum. Identity of the self

depends on its sense of significance and meaning of the objects and situations it

encounters in life.[136] Since the significance and meaning of the objects and situations

the self encounters in life necessitates a certain *dialogue* and *language,* community

and communal life become necessities for identity formation.

II.3.ii The Relation between Self and Society

Related to the above arguments, communitarians argue that liberalism misreflects the

relation between the individual and society. This strand of communitarian argument

is based on the idea that liberalism builds upon and promotes a particular conception

of the individual's relation to his/her community and by doing this, it undermines

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[133] M. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice,* pp. 55-9, 152-4.
[134] A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* London: Duckworth, 1985, pp. 204-5
[135] C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in A. Gutman (ed.), *Multiculturalism,* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 32-3.
[136] S. Mulhall and A. Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians,* p.111; see also C. Taylor, *Philosophical*

and eliminates alternative ways of thinking about this relation.[137] By putting emphasis on people's freedom and the principle of non-interference, and by drawing boundaries among individuals where one's freedom begins and another's ends, liberalism assumes that people's interests are *antagonistic*.[138] This approach *eliminates* the true possibilities of *communal solidarity*. Rather communitarians believe that the characterizing relation between the individual and society is not antagonism but mutual aid depending on a common good.[139]

Sandel stresses this point while he is criticizing Rawls. He argues that Rawls does favor a community in which its citizens are forced to think of themselves as participants in a scheme of mutual cooperation from which they derive their personal advantages. Sandel argues that this limited view of politics distorts people's understanding of social relations – family, kinship, and so on – which are thus excluded from the political arena by liberalism. His point is that a political community cannot be founded on a conception of the self that is individuated and separated from these non-political ties.[140]

II.3.iii Universal or Particular

Another communitarian critique directly addresses liberalism's claim that its overriding values such as liberty or justice are universal and cross-cultural. Communitarians condemn such overriding values and they argue that there is not a single model of human fulfillment. Models of human fulfillment characterized by the community's way of life[141] can vary across cultures, across time and no overriding

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Papers II, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 22-3, 26-7.
[137] *Ibid.*
[138] J. Reiman, 'Liberalism and Its Critics', in C. F. Delaney (ed.), *The Liberalism-Communitarianism Debate: Liberty and Community Values,* London: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994, p. 30.
[139] T. Moody, 'Some Comparisons between Liberalism and an Eccentric Communitarianism', in C. F. Delaney (ed.), *The Liberalism-Communitarianism Debate,* p. 92.
[140] S. Mulhall and A. Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians,* p. 54-5.
[141] As they believe that human beings cannot form a conception of freedom, liberty or good life

value can succeed to realize it universally. In their view, this cultural particularity – that different cultures have different values, and that different social institutions and political procedures should be applied to them – is neglected in liberalism due to its claim of universality. Taking Rawls's *justice as fairness* as a specific example, Walzer argues that 'justice is relative to social meanings', hence we cannot speak of a universal conception of justice.[142]

Michael Walzer's works mainly revolve around the 'universalism vs. particularism' axis and the question of finding an appropriate methodology of politics. His emphasis on culture and cultural differences necessarily undermines any universalistic theory. His book *Spheres of Justice* begins with his rejection of any standpoint constituted outside cultural differences and particularities. He writes:

> My argument is radically particularistic. I don't claim to have achieved any great distance from the social world in which I live. One way to begin the philosophical enterprise .... is to walk out of the cave, leave the city, climb the mountain, fashion for.... an objective and universal standpoint. Then, one describes the terrain of everyday life from far away, so that it loses its particular contours and takes on a general shape. But I mean to stand in the cave, in the city, on the ground.[143]

Here, Walzer's critique is directed to any 'proceduralist philosophical argument' based on a methodological abstraction like the Rawlsian 'original position'. Though *Spheres of Justice* is about constructing a theory of justice against *justice as fairness*, he rejects procedural approaches when he takes toleration as a subject of inquiry as well. In *On Toleration*[144] he defends a historical and contextual account of toleration

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outside a community, they insist that political life must be based on a concern for community (not the individual), because what determines and shapes individuals' natures is the community. J. Hampton, *Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Westview Press, 1997, p. 182 and C. F. Delaney, 'Introduction', in C. F. Delaney (ed.), *The Liberalism-Communitarianism Debate: Liberty and Community Values*, p. VII and T. W. Simon, 'The Theoretical Marginalization of the Disadvantaged: A Liberal/Communitarian Failing', in C. F. Delaney (ed.), *The Liberalism-Communitarianism Debate*, p. 115.
[142] M. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, p. 6.
[143] *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
[144] M. Walzer, *On Toleration*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997, p. 3.

and coexistence, and, most importantly, he advocates a political relativism with a thin moral code, which is very similar to that of Isaiah Berlin. He argues that

> The idea that our choices are not determined by a single universal principle ..... is, strictly speaking, a relativist idea. The best political arrangement is relative to history and culture of the people whose lives it will arrange. But I am not advocating an unconstrained relativism... no arrangement is a moral option unless ... it holds basic human rights. [145]

This relativism is also visible in his conception of good life and justice. He argues that there exists an infinite number of possible lives that are shaped by an infinite number of possible cultures, traditions, religions, political arrangements. In his view, a given society is just if its substantive life is faithful to the shared understandings of its members. Hence, justice is not a concept to be defined outside the cultural environment; on the contrary, justice is relative to cultural meanings.[146]

Walzer defines the person as a culture-producing creature and this is what makes people equal. He asks 'by virtue of what characteristics are we one another's equals'? His answer is: 'We are culture-producing creatures; we make and inhabit meaningful worlds... there is no way to rank and order these worlds..'[147] Nevertheless, Walzer suggests that there is a transcultural minimal code of morality – the expectation not to be deceived, treated with gross cruelty or murdered – and every culture has equal right to prosper, and deserves equal respect as long as it is subject to that thin moral code.[148]

Like justice or toleration any overriding value must be considered as culture- and time-specific and just *like the self* these values must be 'situated in existing social and cultural structures. For instance, Taylor argues that freedom in liberalism is something to be pursued for its own sake, and this is problematic because it does

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[145] *Ibid.,* p. 5.
[146] M. Walzer, *Spheres of Justice,* pp. 312-13.
[147] *Ibid.,* p. 314.
[148] A. Vincent, *Nationalism and Particularity,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

not tell people which ends are good or not.[149] By situated freedom, communitarians mean freedom for a certain task or project to be pursued.

II.3.iv Neutrality or Perfectionism

Communitarians explicitly reject the idea of *neutral authority* that is a *sine qua non* for liberalism. Walzer argues that the liberal argument for neutrality is an induction from liberalism's assumption of dissociated individuals. He continues that since dissociated individuals will never agree on the nature of good life, the state should allow them to think and live as they think best.[150]

What communitarians propose is that this idea of neutrality should be abandoned for a politics of the 'common good', which is defined by the community's way of life.[151] In this sense, communitarians favor 'state-perfectionism', which should encourage people to adopt conceptions of the good consistent with the community's way of life.[152] For instance, Sandel argues that a community has to be empowered to protect itself against a type of activity that 'offends its way of life'.[153] The political authority's primary role is to ensure the well-being and well-functioning of the community life which makes possible all human flourishing and all human good.[154]

The strict distinction between private and public imposed by the idea of neutrality is another problem for communitarians. Since communitarians assume that people derive their identities, values conceptions of good from the social matrix, this argument inevitably leads us to the view that *whatever is properly social must become the province of the political*. For instance, according to Taylor, for

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[149] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy,* p. 222.
[150] M. Walzer, 'The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', pp. 16-17.
[151] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy,* p. 220.
[152] *Ibid.*
[153] A. Buchanan, 'Assessing the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', *Ethics,* 99:4, July 1989, p.

individuals to develop and exercise their capacity of self-determination, specific social conditions are a necessity.[155] That is why political authority should be 'perfectionist', that is, in order to supply the specific conditions for people to exercise their capacities.

Concerning the nation-state, communitarians seem to adapt a more decentralized structure since they focus on subnational groups and associations such as families, neighborhoods, religious communities and the like.[156] For instance, Charles Taylor argues that

> If our aim is to combat, rather than adjust to, the trends of growth, concentration and mobility, and the attendant bureaucratic capacity and rigidity of representative democracy, then some measures of decentralization are indispensable, with the consequent strengthening of more localized, smaller-scale of units of self rule.[157]

Sandel too favors a decentralized political structure. He argues that the future appears to be a recovery of small-scale communities, not the nation state. He takes community in a more organic sense: by community he means families, tightly knit groups, in which there may be found a more substantive common good that unites and binds people together.[158]

But, the very idea of group and association is very different from that of interest groups and associations we find in American empirical pluralism. Communitarians stress that a genuine community is not a mere association of individuals. Community is something that people are born into, and that does not depend on any contract between people holding private interests.

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[154] J. Hampton, *Political Philosophy*, pp. 184-93.
[155] For an excellent discussion on communitarian and the liberal view of the state, see W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 245-2.
[156] A. Vincent, *Nationalism and Particularity*, p. 155.
[157] *Ibid.*
[158] M. Sandel, 'The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self', pp. 253-4.

II.3.v Identity Politics and Communitarians

Another important communitarian challenge to liberal theory concerns the issue of recognition, more specifically the inability of liberal democratic institutions to recognize and respect the particular cultural identities of their citizens. The most elaborate statement of this challenge can be found in Charles Taylor's 'The Politics of Recognition'. The problem, Taylor argues, is that

> our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person, or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves.[159]

Taylor believes that the most important feature of human life is its 'dialogical' character. 'We define our identity always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us'.[160] Taylor notes that there is nothing new or modern about this. People did have identities in pre-modern times, and these depended on recognition too. But the need was not acknowledged as such until the modern age, which created the conditions under which the attempt to fulfill this need can fail.

The demand for recognition and the mode of politics based on this need – which Taylor calls 'the politics of difference' – is a serious challenge for liberal democracies which are based on the idea that all humans are equally worthy of respect. Liberal claims to neutrality and difference-blindness are rejected on the grounds that they are in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture:[161]

> Those who take the view that individual rights must always come first, and, along with nondiscrimination provisions, must take precedence over collective goals, are often

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[159] C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', p. 25.
[160] *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[161] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-4.

speaking from a liberal perspective that has become more and more widespread in the Anglo-American world. [162]

Such a liberalism of rights is inhospitable to difference, Taylor notes, because it cannot accommodate what the members of distinct societies want most, which is survival. Liberalism is not a possible meeting ground for all cultures, because it is the political expression of one set of cultures: hence, liberalism cannot and should not claim complete cultural neutrality.[163]

What needs to be done in this context is to reform liberal institutions in a way which would show equal respect to all cultures. Taylor calls this fundamental principle 'the presumption of equal worth'. He believes that cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings over a long period of time are almost certain to have something that deserves our admiration and respect:

> We only need a sense of our own limited part in the whole human story to accept the presumption. It is only arrogance, or some analogous moral failing, that can deprive us of this.[164]

In the light of the above arguments, communitarian pluralism

- takes individual as the product of communal values, shared practices of community, social roles that s/he is born into and symbolic social order that s/he shares with other members of the community;

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[162] *Ibid.*, p. 56.
[163] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[164] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-3.

- takes society as a community of communities, which are bound together by a common will and a sense of belonging, which brings mutual understanding and aid;

- favors decentralization;

- is against any drive to universality and puts strong emphasis on the particularity of each community and its way of life;

- defends the idea that the community's way of life should be protected by the political authority and should be taken as 'authoritative horizons' for its members.

II. 4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter aimed to provide an introduction to the concept of pluralism by situating it in a historical context. It also aimed to present the main arguments of liberal and communitarian pluralism. First, starting from John Locke, it was argued that liberal pluralism is mainly based on the central idea of the individual as a rational and autonomous being, equipped with the capacity of self-determination. For instance, Mill argues that each person contains a unique personality whose understanding of good is different from that of anyone else. The experience of others provides no grounds for overriding her/his judgement.

This argument mainly forms the basis of the liberal understanding of difference. The assumption lying behind the liberal conception of self is that individuals are not the product of their economic, religious, sexual or political relations: On the contrary, they are the authors of these relationships since they are free to question and reject any particular relationship. This framework characterizes

liberalism's perception of difference and the ways to cope with it. Giving equal rights and liberties to people as citizens, liberal theory assumes that they will be the architects of their lives, and will transcend the problems created by the existence of differences.

John Rawls's conception of difference and pluralism mainly falls in line with the above picture. For Rawls, the plurality of values and comprehensive doctrines is a fact and people cannot agree about their values and comprehensive doctrines. Nevertheless, this is the domain of the social, Rawls argues, not the domain of the political. In the domain of the political, people as citizens are capable of reaching an agreement on the principles of justice, which will govern the political arrangements of their society. Rawls's pluralism takes citizens – reasonable people – as central subjects of political theory. Private space, and the differences in private space, are subjected to the dictates of reasonableness.

Although they are both in the liberal tradition, Rawls and Berlin have different conceptions of difference and pluralism. Whereas pluralism is a fact for Rawls, Berlin sees it as an intrinsic value. Berlin argues that moral life is characterized by a plurality of values which cannot be ranked by a common measure. Since morality is not homogenous and harmonious, people are, by their very nature, committed to different values, which have equal value and deserve equal respect. Yet Berlin sees this equality constrained by liberty and human suffering: the individual is worthy and should be protected. Still, liberal pluralism is individualist, and aims to protect the individual, her/his way of life and values.

Although communitarians also attack contemporary liberal democracies and their policies on practical grounds, notably regarding the issue of the cultural rights of minorities, their target is mainly John Rawls and his theory of justice on

philosophical grounds, which is, for them, the personification of liberal democratic regimes in political theory. Taking the individual as the product of communal values, shared practices of community, and her/his social relationships, communitarians problematize the liberal belief in the self as author of its own life. Individuals, communitarians argue, are bound by their social relations and what is good for them lies in what they share with the other members of the community. Pluralism is a necessity, not to protect individuals as it is the case with liberalism, but to protect communities and communal values. Although the authors labeled as communitarian do not constitute a homogenous entity and the fact that their criticisms target different angles of liberal theory, what unites them is the priority of community over the political.

It is also important to stress that communitarianism is not a rejection but a critique of liberalism, attempting to bring to our attention some concepts undervalued by liberal theory. As Walzer argues 'liberalism really does require periodic communitarian correction ... The communitarian correction of liberalism cannot be anything other than a selective reinforcement of those same (liberal) values.'[165] Community which is seen to occupy a secondary place compared to freedom and equality in liberalism, is placed at the center of the political. A similar point has been raised by others as well, including radical democrats. Chantal Mouffe for instance argues that what the communitarians really attack is not liberalism *per se*, but liberal individualism.[166]

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[165] M. Walzer, 'The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', p. 15.
[166] C. Mouffe, 'Rawls: Political Philosophy without Politics', in D. Rasmussen (ed.), *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 217. David Miller, who calls himself a communitarian, makes a similar point, arguing that we can talk of a liberal-communitarian debate only if we equate liberalism with individualism. See D. Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity*, pp. 99-101.

The communitarian attack on liberal individualism and its conception of self is plausible since individuals cannot be seen apart from their social relations and the social matrix into which they are born. They rightly argue that reason, freedom, equality, justice do not operate in a vacuum, that they are embedded in cultural and historical contexts. To argue that decisions are choices consciously and intentionally made by individuals between alternatives is to ignore the formative role of social relations, communitarians argue. Identity – who we are – is not constructed outside society; on the contrary, the culture, traditions, values of a given society and the social relations that surround the individual play a crucial role in the formation of identity positively or negatively – i.e. positively, if s/he admits these values and relations; negatively, if s/he rejects them, thereby making them her/his 'other'.

While trying to fill the vacuum in the liberal conception of self and society, the communitarians propose a stable and closed structure, namely community, unified around a common will and a sense of belonging, which leads to mutual understanding and aid. But the way they explain the formation of identities is too simplistic. They ignore the fact that communal values which are supposed to unify the community can sometimes be rejected by some members of this community and become their 'other'. Then they overlook the fact that the communal values themselves can be a source of conflict, as power relations are implicated in the process of their definition.

In a more general sense, it can be argued that the communitarian critique of liberalism is incomplete since it fails to notice the existence of the relations of subordination and domination, which was also ignored by liberals. To counter the liberal argument that decisions are the conscious choices of individuals between alternatives with the claim that they should rather be seen as the outcome of social

relations and communal values does not go too far: as Steven Lukes has argued, people can be prevented, to whatever degree, from having grievances since their perceptions, cognitions, and preferences are shaped in a way that 'they accept their role in the existing order of things either because they can see or imagine no alternative to it, or because they see it as natural and unchangeable, or because they value it as divinely ordained and beneficial.'[167] This is the most effective and insidious face of power, according to Lukes, preventing conflicts of interests from arising in the first place. This brings us to the radical democratic critique of liberal and communitarian pluralism, which will be the subject of the next chapter.

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[167] S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View*, p. 24.

CHAPTER III

RADICAL DEMOCRATIC PLURALISM

> The word 'radicalism' is derived from the Latin 'radix' meaning 'root'. Radicalism is any stance, practical, intellectual or both, that goes to the root of existing practices, beliefs or values.[168]

Radical democracy has emerged as a critique of liberal democracy and Marxism in the late 1980s. The proponents of radical democracy – mainly Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe – share the common view that liberal democracy and Marxism, and their theoretical and normative tenets need to be problematized. While doing this, however, they adopt post-structuralist methods of analysis, and are highly influenced by the work of Gramsci, Wittgenstein, Foucault, Lacan and Derrida. This chapter will mainly focus on the arguments of Laclau and Mouffe, as they are the leading exponents of radical democracy. In their book, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*[169], Laclau and Mouffe set out the main tenets of a post-Marxist understanding of politics and propose radical democracy in place of liberal democracy and socialism.

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[168] N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes (eds), *International Encyclopedia of Social and Behavioural Sciences* (26 volumes), Amsterdam and New York: Elsevier.
[169] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* London: Verso, 1996.

Nevertheless, proponents of radical democracy are not very comfortable with the idea that radical democracy should be understood as a pure post-modernist project. As Mouffe notes, it rejects the epistemological perspective of the Enlightenment, but it embraces the 'unfulfilled project of democracy', the democratic revolution.[170] What the authors advance is a deconstruction of both political liberalism and Marxism by keeping the best parts of each at hand.

Broadly, radical democracy is a conception of a 'politics of antagonisms' in which every power position is constructed and negotiated anew, in which differences must be accepted as a good in itself, and no relation between class and political position is assumed. For radical democracy, the 'infinite character of conflict' becomes an absolutely vital source for sustaining democracy.[171]

Emerging from an anti-essentialist, discursive and conflictual theoretical ground, the radical democratic pluralist approach rejects the dream of a perfect consensus or a harmonious collective will, accepting instead the permanence of conflicts and antagonisms.[172] It proposes the realization of a radical democratic pluralism through the creation of a 'chain of equivalence' among the 'new democratic struggles' – or new social movements –, each preserving its autonomy.[173]

This chapter aims to lay out the main arguments of radical democratic pluralism against Marxism and liberal democracy. In line with this aim, the chapter will first examine the relation between radical democracy and Marxism. Since the former emerged as a reaction to the latter, particular emphasis will be put on the way

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[170] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London: Verso, 1993, pp. 10-11.
[171] B. Epstein, 'Radical Democracy and Cultural Politics', in D. Trend (ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State,* New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 128.
[172] C. Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy', in D. Trend (ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State,* New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 20.
[173] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*; A. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, London: Routledge, 1998; C. Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy', in K. Nash (ed.), *Contemporary Political Sociology,* Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

it diverges from Marxism. Second, radical democracy, its main concepts and arguments will be introduced. Here, radical democracy's conceptualization of 'individual', 'society' and 'politics' will be explored through its central concepts such as discourse, articulation, subject positions, antagonism and nodal points. In the light of these, radical democratic pluralism and its conditions of existence, as elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe, will be discussed.

III.1 Radical Democracy: Post-*Marxism* or *Post*-Marxism?

In their introduction to *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe claim that the Left is in a 'strategic' and 'theoretical' crisis due to radical changes in world politics in the 1980s – such as the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the unification of Germany, the break-up of Yugoslavia, and so on – and the appearance of new kinds of social struggles – like feminism, peace activism, environmentalism, lesbian and gay rights campaigns – which have radically redefined the meaning of politics in Left.[174] They argue that

> The new forms of social conflict have .... thrown into crisis theoretical and political frameworks... that correspond to the classical discourses of the Left and the characteristic modes in which it has conceived the agents of social change, the structuring of social spaces and the privileged points for the unleashing of historical transformation. [175]

In their opinion, the whole conception of socialism is in crisis and the main tenets of socialism are to be redefined: its 'ontological centrality of the working class', its notion of 'revolution', and its utopian dream of a post-revolutionary and 'post-political' society in which a 'perfectly unitary and homogenous collective will' would prevail.[176]

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[174] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* pp. 1-5.
[175] *Ibid.,* pp. 1-2.
[176] A. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary,* p. 2.

In response to this crisis of the Left, they propose a new conception of politics, a radical democratic one that stands between political liberalism and Marxism. According to Laclau, radical democracy aims to extend the principle of equality to wider social spheres in response to social demands arising from fragmented constituencies. Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, argues that radical democracy intends to radicalize the main principles of political liberalism and democracy – liberty and equality –, 'not to seek other principles on which to establish another kind of society'.[177] They are still Marxists, however, as they argue that capitalism should be abandoned for it brings into existence relations of subordination.

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the authors explicitly aim to set out a post-Marxist theory of politics. They write: 'at this point we should state quite plainly that we are now situated in a post-Marxist terrain ... but our intellectual project in this book is *post*-Marxist, it is evidently also post-*Marxist*'.[178] Hence, discarding the Marxist commitment to class, material base and post-revolutionary society is *post*-Marxist, whereas keeping the Gramscian concept of hegemony and refusing capitalism as a mode of production is post-*Marxist*. In an interview, Laclau puts this in another way: 'I haven't rejected Marxism. Something very different has occurred. It's Marxism that has broken up and I believe I'm holding on to its best fragments.'[179]

Laclau and Mouffe begin by arguing that Marxism is founded on three basic assumptions: first, the interests of social classes are pre-given, that is to say determined by the material base; second, the working class is the privileged agency for the transformation of society, that is to say revolution and third, politics becomes

[177] S. Wilks, *Talking About Tomorrow: A New Radical Politics*, London: Pluto, 1993, pp. 110 and 120-1.
[178] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 1996, p. 4.
[179] E. Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, London: Verso, 1990, p. 201.

'pointless' after the revolution.[180] Then, drawing on post-structuralism, Laclau and Mouffe attempt to deconstruct Marxism by arguing that the first two arguments point to the essentialist nature of the Marxist discourse and the third one points to the superficiality of Marxism's conception of politics.

The theoretical background of these radical democratic objections to classical Marxism will be examined in the following two sections while discussing the conceptual basics of radical democracy, and will end by a discussion of radical democracy's conception of identity, society and politics.

III.2 Theoretical Components of Radical Democracy

The concept of discourse forms the main axis around which radical democratic theoretical analysis revolves. In radical democracy, all objects are taken to be the objects of discourse: they are not dependent on any economic or political system, since they derive their meanings from the discursive field.

Interestingly, one can find the traces of radical democracy in Ernesto Laclau's early writings when he is stressing in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*[181] that there is no necessary link between ideologies and class positions. He argues that an ideology should be taken as having no 'precise class connotation'.[182] The class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is an ideological battle and the hegemony of the bourgeoisie depends on its ability to embrace the popular-democratic 'interpellations'[183] and articulate them as constitutive of its class ideology. Laclau argues that any ideology is class-neutral and the counter-hegemonic

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[180] M. Barrett, *The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault*, Cambridge: Polity, 1991, p. 62.
[181] E. Laclau, *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory,* London: Verso, 1994.
[182] *Ibid*. p. 111.
[183] 'Interpellation', first coined by Louis Althusser, is a milestone for the study of ideologies. For Althusser, 'interpellation' is the mechanism through which ideology constitutes people as subjects. Althusser with his notion of interpellation paved the way to a more linguistic or 'discursive' conception of ideology. T. Purvis and A. Hunt, 'Discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology, discourse, ideology...', *British Journal of Sociology*, 44:3, September 1993, pp.481-3.

task of the socialist political theorist is to 'disarticulate' these ideological elements, to show their non-class character and gain hegemony by seizing these class-neutral interpellations.[184] The main aim of Laclau is to detach ideology from society.

What distinguishes Laclau's early position in the late 70s from *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is that in the latter, first, the term 'ideology' is replaced by the term 'discourse', a term that has much more emphasis on linguistics than ideology and, second, taking the argument that ideologies and class positions have no necessary interdependence one step further, it is claimed that society as an ensemble is a construction of discourses.

III.2.i Discourse and Anti-Essentialism

Discourse can be defined as a 'system of linked signs' that refers to the individual social networks of communication through the medium of language or non-verbal sign systems.[185] Discourse theory – the theory which accepts that all objects and actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules[186] – takes its start from Ferdinand de Saussure and his linguistic theory which are presented in the courses he has given in Geneva between 1906 and 1911. In these courses Saussure defined language as a system of signs conceived as the relation between a signifier (a codified sound or image) and a signified (the concept or the object that is being referred).[187]

The relevance of Saussure and his linguistic theory to discourse theory results from three insights he had concerning language. First, he argues that the relation between the signifier and the signified is *arbitrary*, which means that there is no

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[184] E. M. Wood, *The Retreat From Class: A New True Socialism,* London: Verso, 1998, p. 52.
[185] T. Purvis and A. Hunt, 'Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse....', p. 485.
[186] D. Howarth and Y. Stavrakakis, 'Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Anaysis', in D. Howarth, A. J. Norval and Y. Stavrakakis (eds), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis,* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000, p.2.

necessary *a priori* historical or conceptual link between the signifier – for instance s-i-s-t-e-r – and the signified – the daughter of one's mother.[188] Second, he claims that language is constructed through differences. In order to understand the meaning of the term 'sister', one has to understand the meaning of terms like 'brother', 'mother', and so on. Hence, language is a system in which no individual element or sign can be defined independently of the others. Third, Saussure argues that it is through language that the meaning of objects are constructed. Each language distinguishes between objects, categorizes them and makes them meaningful for people using the language. This articulation of reality with language is arbitrary because for Saussure nothing extra-linguistic motivates this process.[189]

Nevertheless, Saussurean linguistics took language as a closed system in which the order of the signifier and the signified strictly overlaps[190], and led to a trend, namely structuralism, which became the major intellectual concern of French philosophy in the 1960s and 1970s. Structuralism assumes that meaning becomes possible by the existence of underlying systems of conventions that enable elements to function individually as signs.[191] In the light of this, structuralist analysis claims that there is an underlying system in each object of inquiry – society, language, literal texts, and so on – which needs to be found out. Claude Lévi-Strauss and his researches on myths and kinship systems are the first and most well-known works of structuralist analysis.

The end of 1970s witnessed the rise of an ensemble of critiques, which were later labeled as post-structuralist, that mainly stressed the *fluidity* and the *contingency*

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[187] F. de Saussure, 'Course in General Linguistics', in W. McNeil and K. S. Feldman (eds), *Continental Philosophy: An Antology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998, p. 298.
[188] F. de Saussure, 'Course in General Linguistics', p. 299.
[189] A. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, pp. 85-6.
[190] E. Laclau, 'Discourse', in R. E. Goodin and P. Pettit, *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 432.

of the relation between the order of the signifier and the signified. Structures, post-structuralist critics claimed, came to be conceptualized as being outside humans' capacities to control or direct as people were seen as being constructed by structures and incapable of interrupting the structure.[192]

Post-structuralist critics – late Barthes, Lacan, Derrida – assert that there cannot exist any underlying system of signs since the relation between the order of the signifier and the signified is undecidable, indeterminate and contingent. Roland Barthes and his notion of *plural text,* whose signifiers cannot be permanently attached to particular signifiers, Jacques Lacan who stressed the impossibility of fixing meaning through a strict correlation between the signifier and the signified, and Jacques Derrida who insists on the radical undecidability of any text – or any structural arrangement – aimed to undermine the structuralist belief that there is a systematic relation between the order of the signifier and the signified.[193]

Another central element in post-structuralist thought is that every social form – e.g. culture – is a 'text' which can be 'read'. The relation between the order of the signifier and the signified is not only relevant to linguistics and literal studies but also to culture, politics and history. The expression 'There is nothing outside the text' refers to the idea that speeches, reports, historical events, policies, interviews, ideas, organizations, political and economic regimes can be taken as 'texts', that is to say they are seen as a set of signifying practices that constitutes a *discourse.*[194] That is why post-structuralist approach is a cornerstone for discourse theory.

[191] S. K. White, 'Poststructuralism and Political Reflection', *Political Theory,* 16:2, 1988, p. 187.
[192] *Ibid.,* p. 114.
[193] E. Laclau, 'Discourse', p. 434.
[194] D. Howarth and Y. Stavrakakis, 'Introducing Discourse Theory', p. 4.

III.2.i.a   Discourse in Radical Democracy

Like other discourse theories, radical democracy is based on the argument that the meaning of social and political reality is constructed through discourses. At the core of their definition of discourse lies the term *articulation. Articulation* is 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice'. And, 'the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice' is called discourse.[195] Then discourse is a framework that articulates different independent elements by altering their meanings and identities. For instance, green ideology can be seen as the articulation of pre-existing elements such as 'ecology', 'grassroots democracy', 'decentralization', 'post-patriarchal relations' whose meanings are transformed after this process.[196]

Laclau and Mouffe refuse the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices.[197] In their view, all objects of inquiry are objects of the discursive field. Nevertheless Laclau and Mouffe argue that:

> The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has *nothing to do* with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs ... independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God', depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive condition of emergence.[198]

Here, the aim is not to deny extra-discursive reality, on the contrary they argue that every object in the realm of extra-discursive reality derives its meaning from the

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[195] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 105.
[196] Y. Stavrakakis, 'Green Ideology: A Discursive Reading', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 2:3, 1997, p.259-80.
[197] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 107.
[198] *Ibid.,* p. 108.

discursive field. Radical democracy takes discourse as constitutive of knowledge, information and meaning.

What Laclau and Mouffe aim to stress by taking discourse as a central concept, is the necessity to provide a critique of 'essentialist' modes of thinking, which can be found not only in Marxism but also in the political liberalism of the Enlightenment. The concept of 'essence' suggests that certain objects – like social, economic formations or human beings – posses some characteristics that exist autonomously of the discourses or theories which construct them.[199] The critics of essentialism contend that there is no such inner essence of humans or economic, social formations as it is argued; on the contrary, 'essence' is constructed through language and its associated practices.[200]

In this sense, Mouffe argues that the distinction between material base and superstructure in Marxism must be discarded because this implies a conception of economy as a world of objects and relations which are prior to any discourse. Instead, she argues that interests can never exist prior to discourses or can never express already existing positions on the economic level. Interests are articulated and constructed within discourses.[201]

As the social formation and the binary class antagonism within it depend on the material base, Marxism privileges the working class as the only subject that can emancipate all humanity from every form of domination. Hence, it is alone destined to become a universal subject, a pure human 'essence' without any particularisms.[202] By taking class as the primary form of social agency and capitalist exploitation as the primary form of domination, Marxism becomes an essentialist discourse, incapable

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[199] R. Bocock, *Hegemony,* London and New York: Tavistock, 1986, p. 112.
[200] *Ibid.*
[201] C. Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects', p. 296.
[202] A. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, pp. 91-7.

of comprehending and explaining the multiplicity of identities, particularisms, oppressive power relations and forms of subordination which are different from capitalist exploitation.[203]

Moreover, for Laclau, there is no systematic mechanism inherent in capitalist social formation that can determine the characteristics of classes. Classes are not to be found already in existence but have to be produced through articulation of discourses. [204]

They also accuse political liberalism for taking agents as unitary subjects[205] – rational, freed from dogma and external authorities, possessing Ratio and capacity to think, and so on – and Marxism for accepting classes and class interests as pre-given, determined by the material base. [206]

Laclau and Mouffe argue that every discursive formation is never entirely 'closed' due to the fact that the order of the signifier and the signified can never completely overlap. Since there is a proliferation of 'floating signifiers' articulated in different discourses, the meaning can never be secured.[207] Meaning is never wholly fixed because no discursive articulation is complete or final.

III.2.ii Identity as Subject Positions

Paradoxically, the argument that meaning is never wholly fixed or can never be secured undermines the possibility of discourses, identities, even differences. If there

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[203] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 41.

[204] C. Mouffe, *Demokratik Paradoks*, Ankara: Epos, 2002, pp. 50-1.

[205] It is necessary to underline that unitary subject of Enlightenment was at first hand challenged by Freud (by his distinction between conscious and unconscious, the idea that some actions of rational people can be driven by their unconscious level over which they have no control or which they are not aware of) and by Marx (who introduced the concept ideology and 'false-consciousness', the idea that rational people can be deceived by the system). For an excellent discussion of this issue see S. Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference', in G. Eley and R. G. Suny (eds), *Becoming National: A Reader*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 339-49.

[206] R. Bocock, *Hegemony*; E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*; C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*.

[207] T. Purvis and A. Hunt , 'Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology...', pp. 492-3.

is no meaning, how can difference exist? While arguing that meaning can never be wholly fixed, Laclau and Mouffe keep the possibility of partial fixations of meaning through 'privileged discursive points' or privileged signifiers:

> The impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations – otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible. Even, in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be a meaning ... Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre.[208]

These privileged signifiers or discursive points are called *nodal points*[209] that partially fix the meaning. For instance, in communist discourse, there is a number of pre-existing signifiers like democracy, state, freedom, and equality which are articulated. These pre-existing signifiers acquire their meaning only by reference to a privileged signifier: communism. Then, democracy becomes 'direct democracy'; freedom and equality acquire economic connotations.[210]

Radical democracy takes identity as constituted within discourses. It is argued that 'the subjectivity of a given social agent is always precariously or provisionally fixed ... at the intersection of various discourses'.[211] Hence, individuals have multiple identities which are constituted through multiple discourses.

One of the distinctive features of Laclau and Mouffe and their post-Marxist radical democracy is that they replace the concept of identity with that of *subject positions*. By *subject position*s they mean the positioning of subjects within a discourse or the multiple forms by which the agents are produced as social actors

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[208] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.112.

[209] In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe use nodal points as substitutes for the Lacanian concept of *point de capiton*.

[210] D. Howarth and Y. Stavrakakis, 'Introducing Discourse Theory', p. 8.

[211] C. Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy', p. 296.

through antagonism or the social relations that create antagonism.[212] As Mouffe

argues:

> Within every society each social agent is inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations –
> relations of production, social relations of sex, race, nationality, etc. All these social
> relations determine subject positions and every social agent is therefore the locus of many
> social positions that cannot be reduced to one. Furthermore, each subject position is itself
> the locus of possible constructions, according to the different discourses that construct that
> position.[213]

A given social agent can identify herself as being 'black', 'feminist', 'Marxist' and

'Muslim'. These identifications do not exist prior to discourses and do not have any

direct relation to social agent's structural position. A black woman becomes aware of

her blackness through discourses. Then, discourse provides the framework through

which we interpret the symbolic order into which we are thrown.[214] And as the order

of the signifier and the signified does not overlap and meaning is never totally fixed,

this becoming or interpretation will be totally contingent, precarious and temporarily

fixed.[215]

Like language, in discourses every subject position/ identity is relational and its

condition of existence is the affirmation of a difference through the determination of

an 'other', which plays the role of a 'constitutive outside'.[216] According to Mouffe,

for any social reality to be constructed, a 'constitutive outside' is an ontological

necessity. Each social reality (identity, relation, discourse, and so on) is constructed

as a difference. Since it is constructed as a difference, the 'constitutive outside' is

always within it. Then, relations of power or relations of subordination have to be

conceptualized not as external relations established between two pre-constituted

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[212] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 11 and 115-6.
[213] C. Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects', p. 296.
[214] A. M. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe*, p.57
[215] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 77.
[216] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

identities but rather as relations constituting these identities themselves.[217] And the consequence is that, first, if every social reality needs a 'constitutive outside as an ontological necessity, then subject positions are constructed through relations of power and antagonism; second if every social reality needs a 'constitutive outside' as an ontological necessity, antagonisms and conflicts are inescapable; and third, if every social reality is constructed through relations of power or relations of subordination (between inside and the constitutive outside), then every social reality is in the realm of the political.

Antagonism occurs because social agents find their subjectivity negated by other discourses or agents. In order to explain this, Laclau Mouffe distinguish between relations of subordination, relations of domination and relations of oppression. In relations of subordination, a social agent is subjected to the will of another, but this does not lead to an antagonism because this relation is naturalized by society and the agent. According to Laclau and Mouffe, antagonism is the result of relations of oppression, which are different from relations of subordination. An antagonism occurs when a social agent – constructed in a specific way through certain existing discourses – finds his/her identity negated by other discourses or practices. And then the antagonism evolves to a relation of domination, in which this negation is perceived as illegitimate and unacceptable by outside agents.[218]

The example of feminism is illustrating. Mouffe argues that although the subordination of women has existed for so long, only at the end of the 19th century this subordination gave rise to a point of antagonism and a feminist movement, thus a *subject position*. She argues that until that time the subordination of women was naturalized, but with the democratic revolutions of the 19th century, which asserted

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[217] C. Mouffe, *Demokratik Paradoks*, p. 32.
[218] S. Sim, *Post-Marxism: An Intellectual History*, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 24.

that 'all men are equal', women found their subjectivity negated.[219] Laclau and Mouffe argue that anti-racist movements, gay and lesbian movements, anti-totalitarian movements can also be linked to the democratic revolutions of the 19th century, which created a discourse constituted around the principle of equality and denaturalized the existing relations of subordination.

III.2.iii   The Radical Democratic Imaginary of the Social

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe set out a conception of the social that contradicts with the Marxist ideal of social unity, which is supposed to occur after the proletarian revolution. Their central argument is that the social unity predicted by Marxism is impossible. Since the social results from a process of articulation, social unity can only be partial and provisory.[220] The social is a 'field of differences' in which identities and their relations are both unfixed and unfixable. 'The impossibility of the social' or the 'the openness of the social' guarantees that the social has no end, that there will always be new emerging differences, which will redefine the social.[221] If our contemporary societies are marked by the 'continuous redefinition of social and political spaces and the constant processes of displacement of the limits constructing social division'[222], the social itself becomes indeterminate. Here, 'the structure of society is to be the product of the political interaction of competing forces rather than an expression of underlying economic laws.'[223]

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* Laclau and Mouffe formulate their post-structuralist or Derridean argument that society is never complete, such that 'the incomplete character of every totality ... leads us to abandon ... society as a sutured

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[219] C. Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects', p. 302-3.
[220] *Ibid.*, p. 55.
[221] S. Sim, *Post-Marxism: An Intellectual History*, p. 20.
[222] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[223] J. Gilbert, 'A Certain Ethics of Openness: Radical Democratic Cultural Studies', *Strategies,* 10:2,

and self-defined totality ... There is no single underlying principle of fixing – hence constituting – the whole field of differences.'[224]

Since society can never be unified, one can never speak of a class unity or social unity or common good or social consensus, because all social formations are in a continuous process of redefinition. Additionally, society's impossibility implies mainly the multiplicity of differences that play a significant role in the contingent construction of identities within discourses.

III.2.iv Hegemony and the Radical Democratic Politics

Before discussing the conception of the political in radical democracy, the distinction between politics and the political needs to be clarified. In this sense, in radical democracy politics is the ensemble of practices, discourses, and institutions seeking to establish a certain order in order to organize human coexistence, which is in a state of potential conflict due to the dimension of the political. On the other hand, the political refers to the dimension of antagonism that is inherent in all human society.[225] Here we can use an analogy following Hobbes: the political is the relations of hostility constituting the 'state of nature' and politics is the relations of contract constituting the state and the society.[226] According to Chantal Mouffe, the 'state of nature' can never be totally discarded because relations of hostility are inherent in the social and the political. She argues that the dimension of antagonism in the political must be accepted as an ontological condition which is an inevitable consequence of the 'constitutive outside'.[227]

2001, p. 192.
[224] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 64.
[225] C. Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Antagonistic Pluralism', *Social Research,* 66:3, Fall 1999, p. 754.
[226] D. Gauthier, 'The Social Contract as an Ideology', in Goodin and Pettit (eds), *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, London: Blackwell, 1997, p. 29.
[227] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 3.

In the realm of politics, radical democracy aims to 'radicalize' the liberal democratic principles of liberty and equality. It aims to realize maximum liberty and equality for society. Laclau and Mouffe argue that the task of radical democracy is to overthrow the hegemonic conservative-liberal discourse and replace it with a radical democratic hegemony. Social struggles fighting against forms of subordination – like new social movements – which are created by the hegemonic discourse of conservative liberalism must form a counter-hegemonic formation[228] through a 'chain of equivalences'.

Laclau and Mouffe have been highly influenced by the works of Antonio Gramsci, especially by his notion of hegemony and historic bloc. According to them the concept of historical bloc (formed by the working class in alliance with other class fractions) and hegemony (the articulation of different forces by the working class, in which the proletariat transcends its corporate interests) enabled Gramsci to partly transcend the 'economistic' view of the working class.[229]

Nevertheless, for Laclau and Mouffe, hegemony refers to something totally different from its usage in Marxist discourse. Radical democracy takes society or any discursive formation as disperse, that is to say impossible to form a closed unity. Since the relation between the signifier and the signified is loose and there is a proliferation of 'floating signifiers' in society, rival political forces are expected to attempt to partially fix those signifiers to particular signifying configurations.[230] The partial fixing of the relation between signifier and signified is called hegemony.

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[228] A hegemonic formation is 'a social and political space relatively unified by the institution of nodal points and the construction of tendentially relational identities'. E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.136.
[229] R. Bocock, *Hegemony*, p.104.
[230] E. Laclau, 'Discourse', p. 435.

Then, the aim of political forces is to reach hegemony through constructing and stabilizing nodal points by articulating as many available elements as possible.[231]

Social struggles – although Laclau and Mouffe never give a full definition of social struggles they explicitly refer to new social movements[232] – can create counter-hegemony in order to realize the radicalization of liberty and equality. In other words, they should form a hegemonic formation through a 'logic of equivalence'. The logic of equivalence functions by creating equivalential identities which express a pure negation of a discursive system.[233] After the coup of 1955 which overthrew the Peronist regime in Argentina, the governments for over 20 years were incapable of meeting the popular demands of the masses. The fact that, Laclau argues, all these particular demands were rejected by the dominant regimes established an increasing relation of equivalence between them. Their unification within a context of differences, for Laclau, was the pure result of all of them being antagonized by the dominant sectors.[234] Although particular groups and their particular demands are combined through logic of equivalence, Laclau and Mouffe insist that none of them should be allowed to impose its agenda upon others or none of them conceived as a privileged agency. This is what they call 'chain of equivalence' among particular social struggles.[235]

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[231] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p.112.

[232] Radical democracy attaches a great importance to new social movements due to their 'radicalisation of the democratic revolution'. Relinquishing the working class as an agent of revolution, they underline the necessity of a maximum number of struggles that resist to the hegemonic formation of capitalism which is installed after the Second World War 'articulating a certain type of labour process, a certain type of state (the Keynesian interventionist state) and new cultural forms (commodification of culture and social life)'. Mouffe argues that new social movements did not emerge because of the crisis of the welfare state. On the contrary these movements are the expressions of resistance against the hegemonic formulation of capitalism and the new forms of subordination it has created after the Second World War. C. Mouffe, 'Hegemony and New Political Subjects: Toward a New Concept of Democracy', p. 299-302.

[233] D. Howarth and Y. Stavrakakis, 'Introducing Discourse Theory', *Differences*, 7:1, 1995, p. 11.

[234] E. Laclau, 'Subject of Politics, Politics of Subject', *Differences*, 7:1, 1995, p.153.

[235] S. Wilks, *Talking About Tomorrow: A New Radical Politics*, p. 111.

III.3 Radical Democratic Pluralism

Radical democratic pluralism has been first elaborated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and is basically founded on the theoretical terrain Laclau and Mouffe cover to define 'subject position'. This version of pluralism is strictly tied to their critique of unitary subject and the recognition of the dispersion of discourse and the multiplicity of subject positions. Since subject positions are produced through antagonism, then for radical democratic pluralism conflicts and antagonisms are not phenomena to be coped with but to be fostered. Nevertheless, in her late writings Chantal Mouffe attempts to place radical democratic pluralism on a normative liberal basis claiming that pluralism has certain limits for it is not pure relativism. Taking the arguments of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* one step further, Mouffe calls for what she terms 'Agonistic Pluralism.'

Radical democratic pluralism is developed at a purely theoretical level in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. It is derived from the plural and multiple discursive universe that is described by Laclau and Mouffe. The following section will examine radical democratic pluralism as it is first formulated in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. Then the argument will focus on Chantal Mouffe – and her conception of agonistic pluralism, as she tries to base radical democratic pluralism on more substantial and normative foundations.

III.3.i Pluralism in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe argue that 'only if it is accepted that the subject positions cannot be led back to a positive and unitary founding principle – only then can pluralism be considered radical'.[236] Radical democratic pluralism becomes epistemologically pluralist when it assumes that a

social agent is a plurality of subject positions which are constructed through many discourses. As society and any discursive formation can never be totally unified, meaning and the origins of antagonisms and struggles are multiple. Significantly, since these subject positions have no intrinsic value and there is no universal hierarchy of ranking, they are equal. Laclau puts it in a different way:

> pluralism arises... from the recognition that there is no human nature, that different cultures and perspectives are incompatible with each other, and that, as a result, political formulae have to be found that make possible the coexistence of these incompatible identities, formulae which cannot pass through any form of authoritarian unification. If the incompatibility becomes a reason for exclusion there is no longer the possibility of a democratic community.[237]

For radical democracy, unity, common good, common will are totalizing systems that can lead to identification of their elements and elimination of their differences. This skepticism of standardization notwithstanding, radical democracy demands partial unity (such as social struggles forming a 'hegemonic formation' as a result of 'hegemonic articulation'). Nevertheless, radical democracy keeps the 'goal of preserving the struggles' autonomy'.[238] Social movements are not conceived as homogenous entities but autonomous movements in a hegemonic bloc. Laclau argues that there is no necessary connection between many of the new social movements, they should be seen to possess their own specificity.[239]

This 'autonomy principle' mostly derives from Ludwig Wittgenstein. Laclau and Mouffe argue that the status of struggles against the hegemonic formation must be conceived in terms of 'family resemblances'; they have similarities but they are not the same. Wittgenstein uses the term in his example of games:

[236] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 167.
[237] S. Wilks, *Talking About Tomorrow*, pp. 118-19.
[238] A. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe: The Radical Democratic Imaginary*, p. 32.
[239] S. Sim, *Post-Marxism: An Intellectual History*, p. 23.

> Consider for example the proceedings that we call 'games'. I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all?... – For if you look at them, you will not see something that is common to all but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that ... I can think no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colours of eyes, gait, etc., overlap in the same way.[240]

This leads us to the claim that there is no single world structure or basic foundation which gives universal meaning to terms or concepts, they become meaningful in the context in which they are used in conjunction with other terms or concepts, just like the moves in a game are meaningful in virtue of the rules of the game or other moves in that game.[241] In this context, there is no underlying structure or a unified common good that defines or determines the struggles resisting the hegemonic formation. Their unity must be seen as the result of a partial fixation of identities.[242]

III.3.ii Chantal Mouffe on Pluralism

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe stress the necessity of the principle of liberty besides equality in radical democratic pluralism. Diverging somewhat from Laclau, Chantal Mouffe carries this emphasis on liberty to institutional grounds. She argues that liberal institutions are vital for the functioning of radical democratic pluralism. Although radical democracy aims to radicalize the democratic revolution, this has to be realized with the help of political liberalism and its institutions.

Mouffe asserts that any democratic project must be based on pluralism, which is the idea that individuals should have the opportunity to organize their lives as they wish, to choose their own ends and to realize them as they think best. But

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[240] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, p. 66, cited in D. Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics and Modernity*, London: Sage, 1995.
[241] F. Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy: A Critical Introduction*, London: Routledge, 2001, p.

paradoxically, according to her, pluralism does not originate from democratic tradition but from the political liberal one.[243] She defines modern democracy as a political form of society, which is the result of an articulation between two distinct traditions: the democratic tradition (equal rights and popular sovereignty) and the political liberal tradition (the defense of individual rights, the rule of law and constitutional government). Pluralism and toleration are the 'counter-balances' to the tendency towards homogenization, consensus or harmony that can be created by the democratic tradition.[244] Here, Mouffe borrows Claude Lefort's analysis on democracy.

Claude Lefort argues that modernity has to be defined at the political level: the main distinguishing characteristic of the modern in contrast to the pre-modern was the democratic revolution of the nineteenth century. This democratic revolution is at the origin of a new institution of the social, in which power becomes an empty place. With democracy, political power is detached from specified persons – like prince or priest – and the 'markers of certainty' that once allowed people to situate themselves in relation to one another have disappeared.[245] In this sense, modern democratic societies become societies in which 'power, law and language are exposed to a radical indetermination.'[246] Society cannot be defined as an organic, unified entity, and cannot be described from a single or universal point of view.[247]

Due to the space left empty by power, democracy risks turning into tyranny when an individual or a political party attempts to 'occupy' that space by claiming to

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[242] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 78.

[243] S. Wilks, *Talking About Tomorrow*, p. 111 and C. Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy', in D. Trend (ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship and the State*, New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 20.

[244] S. Wilks, *Talking About Tomorrow*, p. 111.

[245] F. Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy*, p. 186; C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 11.

[246] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 11.

[247] C. Mouffe, *Demokratik Paradoks*, p. 13.

embody the society.[248] Democracy, signifying a homogenous, unified collective must always be balanced with liberal institutions. That is why Mouffe argues that political liberalism and liberal institutions are vital for a better society :

> Pluralism means discarding the dangerous dream of a perfect consensus, of a harmonious collective will and collective will and accepting the permanence of conflicts and antagonisms..... As soon as the possibility of a substantial homogeneity is abandoned, the role of liberal political institutions appears in a different light. Far from merely covering up the class divisions of capitalist society as many participatory democrats seem to believe they guarantee the projection of individuals' rights against the tyranny of the majority or the domination of the totalitarian party or state. This is why political liberalism must be a central component of a project of radical and plural democracy.[249]

The radical democratic pluralist understanding, Mouffe argues, takes antagonisms and conflicts as a virtue of democracy, and pluralism as 'precluding any dream of final reconciliation'.[250] A society in which all antagonisms have been eliminated, constituted by unified and homogenous people is far from being a democratic one. Then, for her, radical democratic pluralism is a continuous quest for democracy and a common good that can never be reached. The common good is like a 'vanishing point', something to which citizens must constantly refer, but can never attain.[251]

III.3.ii.a Agonistic Pluralism

In her late writings, Mouffe is mostly inspired by Carl Schmitt's[252] definition of politics as enemy-friend relations. Schmitt claims that 'the defining feature of politics is struggle and there always are concrete human groupings which fight other concrete human groupings in the name of justice, humanity, order or peace. Therefore, there will always be a debate about the nature of justice and no final

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[248] F. Cunningham, *Theories of Democracy*, p. 185.
[249] C. Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy', p. 20.
[250] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[251] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 85.
[252] Carl Schmitt was a leading critic of liberal democracy in the early twentieth century. See C. Mouffe (ed.), *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, London: Verso, 1999.

agreement can ever be reached'. Then, the criterion of the political is the enemy-friend relation, which involves a creation of a 'we' in opposition to a 'them'. [253]

Mouffe, borrowing Schmitt's enemy-friend relation defines the political as the arena of antagonisms. In the realm of politics, the other should not be seen *as an enemy to be destroyed* but as an 'adversary'. An *adversary* is a *legitimate* enemy 'with whose ideas we are going to struggle but whose right to defend those ideas we will not put into question'. [254] An adversary is an enemy to be tolerated, an enemy who shares a common adhesion to the ethico-political principles of democracy with other adversaries. [255] Then, any illiberal movement or identity is an enemy to radical democratic pluralism. And the political relations between enemies are antagonistic. In contrast, political relations between adversaries are agonistic. Hence, according to Chantal Mouffe, the aim of political democracy must be to transform 'antagonism' into 'agonism'. [256] Mouffe adopts the idea that pluralism should be viewed on the model of a contest, that is to say an 'agon'.

Their common adhesion to ethico-political principles of democracy notwithstanding, adversaries may have disagreement on the meaning and implementation of these principles. But these disagreements cannot be resolved through deliberation or rational discussion due to the antagonistic character of relations. Surely, pluralist democracy needs a certain amount of consensus, but such a consensus implies only some ethico-political principles. [257] As these ethico-political principles exist through many different and conflictual interpretations, such a consensus has to be a 'conflictual consensus'. Such an approach points to the impossibility of establishing a consensus without exclusion, it does not try to

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[253] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, pp. 113 and 123.
[254] C. Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Antagonistic Pluralism', p. 755.
[255] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 4.
[256] *Ibid.*

'disguise' these forms of exclusion under a 'veil of rationality' or morality. Such an approach, Mouffe argues, is much more receptive than the liberal model to multiplicity of identities in a plural society and to the complexity of the power structure that this multiplicity implies.[258]

III.4 Concluding Remarks

This chapter aimed to provide the main arguments of radical democratic pluralism. Examining the relationship between radical democracy and Marxism; it is argued that radical democracy's main break with Marxism lies in its rejection of class politics and the determining role of the material base. Radical democrats believe that Marxism is a monolithic system in which all differences are reduced to class differences. On the contrary, they emphasize the multiplicity of identity, which can be constructed by reference to a multiplicity of signifiers, and class is just one of them.

Radical democracy and its main concepts were introduced in order to provide the theoretical terrain in which radical democratic pluralism developed. What characterizes and distinguishes radical democracy from liberalism and communitarianism is its ontological assumptions. For radical democracy, everything is discursive and can be seen as a text to be read. This helps us to surpass any essentialist approach to politics or identity. It also radically undermines the unitary subject of liberalism, i.e. as the author of her/his life, rational, freed from dogma, consciousness.

It was also stressed that radical democracy does not take discourses as monolithic structures. Discourses are frameworks of meaning that articulate independent elements by altering their meaning. They are neither static nor totally

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[257] C. Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Antagonistic Pluralism', p. 756.

hegemonic. Borrowing the Lacanian interpretation of the relation between the signifier and the signified, Laclau and Mouffe argue that meaning can never be totally fixed, hence no discourse can totally be hegemonic. Political struggle consists of the attempts to fix the discursive field of different discourses.

This was followed by a detailed exploration of another important concept, namely subject positions. It is claimed that identity in radical democracy is not unitary: on the contrary, it consists of a plurality of positions. Moving on to radical democratic pluralism, it was argued that there is a difference of tone between Laclau and Mouffe's early work and Mouffe's later writings. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the authors put emphasis on the manifestation of differences through social struggles, especially new social movements. Their conception of pluralism stresses the necessity of taking identities as a multiplicity of subject positions and society as the product of a multiplicity of discourses, which cannot be unified around a common will and a common consensus. There is no hierarchy between differences and no norm to govern the society, except the principles of equality and liberty. Since these principles cannot have any fixed meaning, as their theoretical framework implies, the authors argue that they can be defined differently in different discourses. Nevertheless, Chantal Mouffe's later writings and the concept of agonistic pluralism she defends, focus on the normative aspects of pluralism, through the introduction of new categories like adversary/enemy/friend.

In the light of these, it can be argued that radical democracy differs from communitarianism and liberalism in many aspects. But does it provide an alternative to these? In order to be able evaluate radical democracy's strengths and weaknesses,

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[258] *Ibid.*, p. 757.

we need to examine in detail the similarities and divergences between these three

schools of thought.

CHAPTER IV

RADICAL DEMOCRACY: AN ALTERNATIVE?

This chapter aims to examine radical democratic pluralism as a political project, and discuss if it can offer new solutions to today's liberal democracies and the on-going theoretical debate on pluralism after the 1980s. While doing this, radical democracy as a critique will be distinguished from radical democracy as an alternative project. This distinction will help us to evaluate the criticisms of radical democracy and its substantial propositions separately. It will be argued that although radical democracy is correct in its diagnosis concerning the problems and deficits of liberal and communitarian frameworks, it fails to offer concrete methods and strategies to deal with these problems and deficits. The first section of the chapter will consist of a comparison of radical democratic pluralism with liberal pluralism and communitarian pluralism, stressing their strengths and weaknesses on particular issues, such as their conception of power, identity and the political. In the second section, radical democracy will be evaluated as an alternative framework to those of communitarians and liberals.

IV.1 Radical Democracy as A Critique

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe propose radical democracy as an alternative to liberalism and Marxism. Nevertheless, radical democratic project is not a *total* rejection of the two, on the contrary, it is a proposition that these two discourses can be articulated in different ways. Taking liberalism's principles of liberty and equality, and Marxism's concept of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe model a radical democratic project that is founded on a post-structuralist and Lacanian terrain, which provides them the necessary theoretical tools to justify that such articulations are possible. Nevertheless, in their later writings, both Laclau and Mouffe extend their theoretical discussion to the latest debates in political philosophy, particularly the debate which revolves around the works of John Rawls and the communitarians. In his recent articles, Laclau aims to broaden the horizon of discussions on pluralism by problematizing the relation between universality and particularity. Chantal Mouffe, on the other hand, tries to situate radical democracy in the contemporary debate between liberals and communitarians. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* was an attempt to distinguish radical democracy from Marxism. Now the authors set their agenda for liberalism and communitarianism.

What contributions can radical democracy make to the debate between liberalism and communitarianism – specifically as to the possibility of protecting and encouraging differences within a society? What kind of arguments does radical democracy have against and in favor of liberals and communitarians? These are the main questions that will be addressed in the following pages. First, the commonalities and differences between liberalism and radical democracy will be explored and second, the relation between communitarianism and radical democracy

will be covered while discussing the strengths and weaknesses of each camp. Comparing radical democracy with liberalism and communitarianism will help us to contextualize and to grasp the limits of the radical critique of both of these lines of thought. It will also help us to evaluate whether this critique is credible or not.

IV.1.i Radical Democracy versus Liberalism

Is radical democracy a liberal project? It is difficult to answer this question with certainty. Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that radical democracy has strong affinities with liberalism. Even Chantal Mouffe calls their radical democratic pluralism as a 'radical democratic *liberal*' one.[259] In fact, in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe implicitly model a radical democratic pluralism based on the main principles of liberalism. They write:

> ... the demand for *equality* is not sufficient, but needs to be balanced by the demand for *liberty*, which leads us to speak of a radical and *plural* democracy... *The task of the left therefore cannot be to renounce liberal-democratic ideology, but on the contrary, to deepen and expand it in the direction of a radical and plural democracy...* The *meaning* of liberal discourse on individual rights is not definitively fixed and ... this unfixity ... permits different forms of articulation and redefinition which accentuate the democratic moment.[260]

Although Laclau does not specifically discuss the relation between liberalism and radical democracy, Chantal Mouffe, in her late writings, tries to justify the incorporation of liberalism into radical democracy as one of its constitutive elements. She argues that political liberalism can be disentangled from the vocabulary it has inherited from the rationalism of Enlightenment and from the connotations it had acquired from economic liberalism, and can be articulated to radical democratic

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[259] 'Démocratie Délibérative ou Pluralisme Agonistique', Conference, Galatasaray University, Istanbul, 26 June 2003.
[260] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, London: Verso, 1996, pp. 185 and 176.

discourse.[261] Her point is that the acceptance of political liberalism does not require us to endorse individualism, economic liberalism, rationalism or universalism.

The logic behind this argument is clear: liberalism is not a pure discourse; on the contrary, just like any other discourse it is an aggregate of articulations of different elements. By disarticulating the economic, rational and universalist elements, political liberalism – a set of institutions characteristic of the 'law state', such as defense of rights, recognition of pluralism, limitation of the role of the state, separation of powers, and so on – can be legitimately adopted by radical democracy.[262]

Political liberalism and its institutions are to be separated from their historical and economic background, and subjected to substantial revisions. Since radical democracy explicitly excludes some of the basic theoretical principles of liberalism such as individualism and rationalism, and adopts different epistemological tools, it aims, in a sense, to deepen and improve the latter. The criticisms radical democracy raises against liberalism have important implications concerning the issue of pluralism since these criticisms are mainly directed at liberalism's perception of difference and its failure to cope with diversity. In this context, it is possible to identify four main areas where radical democratic pluralism departs from liberal pluralism. The first area of disagreement concerns their conception of the self. Drawing on the insights of linguistics and post-structuralism, radical democracy has a profoundly different conception of self compared to liberalism, based on the discursive construction of differences. In such a view, difference becomes a constitutive feature of the self, not a problem to cope with. The second disagreement

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[261] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, London: Verso, 1993; C. Mouffe, *Demokratik Paradoks*, Ankara: Epos, 2002.

[262] C. Mouffe, 'Rawls: Political Philosophy without Politics', in D. Rasmussen (ed.), *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990, p. 217.

relates to the conception of power and politics. Pluralism is not only about identifying and dealing with differences, but also about relations of power between these differences and their reflection into politics. This takes us to the third area of disagreement which relates to liberalism's distinction between public and private spaces. Such a distinction is spurious according to radical democracy, because the boundary between the public and the private is not fixed but shifting. The final area of disagreement concerns the idea of consensus that characterizes liberal pluralism. Radical democrats reject the idea of consensus as they believe that each consensus brings with it exclusion, which in turn takes us back to the issue of power relations between differences, that is the question of which differences can be voiced and which ones are repressed.

IV.1.i.a The Conception of Self

At first sight, radical democracy is distinguished from liberalism by its emphasis on discourse. Radical democracy is dissatisfied with any conception of the political which ignores the constitutive role of discourses. Individuals' identities, interests, and values are also determined within discourses. This linguistic emphasis leads to a different conceptualization of the individual. To recall, in the linguistic theory of Ferdinand de Saussure, which had a considerable influence on radical democracy, every object in language is constructed as a difference. As a consequence, in the discursive terrain of society, radical democrats argue, every individual or every identity is taken to be a difference. Difference, for radical democracy, is not a consequence, an inevitable fact or a desirable good in society as it is the case in liberalism but an ontological necessity. Individuals are not unified entities, which have become different, rather they are the ensemble of many contingent and partial

fixations within discourses, which are constructed as differences. The individual is conceptualized as a difference, not as an entity holding differences.

Laclau and Mouffe criticize the unified subject of liberalism, which is supposed to be constituted by pre-given characteristics like rationality, autonomy, conscious reflection or self-determination. Laclau and Mouffe describe the unitary subject as 'an agent both rational and transparent to itself', as 'origin and basis of social relations' and with a 'supposed unity and homogeneity of the ensemble of its positions'.[263]

Against this essentialist conception of self, radical democracy aims to develop a theory of the subject as a 'decentered', 'detotalized' agent constructed at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions.[264] Individuals have no pre-given characteristics or interests; individuals and their interests are defined within discourses. Moreover, individuals – or subjects – cannot be the origin of social relations as 'all experience depends on precise discursive conditions of possibility'.[265] This argument, I find, is very problematic on the grounds that it attributes an ontological superiority to discourse over the individual and social relations. In radical democracy discourse seems to operate in a vacuum, separated from any historical, economic, social or cultural dimension. As pointed out in Chapter 2, Laclau and Mouffe write:

> Our analysis rejects the distinction between discursive and non-discursive practices. It affirms ... that every object is constituted as an object of discourse, in so far as no object is given outside every discursive condition of emergence. [266]

If all those dimensions and individuals are subject to the 'precise discursive conditions of possibility', then in which circumstances does a new discourse emerge?

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[263] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 115.
[264] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, pp. 2-3, 12.
[265] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 115.

Just like liberalism which attributes a 'constitutive' role[267] to individuals and defines them as rational, autonomous beings, freed from any kind of dogma and any exterior influence, radical democracy leaves us with a concept of discourse assigned with an all-embracing 'constitutive' role, which is freed from any kind of exterior influence.

IV.1.i.b The Conception of Power and Politics

Radical democrats differ from liberals in their emphasis on the link between discourses and power relations. In liberalism, individuals are taken to be autonomous and rational selves who are able to criticize or question social, cultural, and political values from a power-free position outside society. Radical democracy strongly challenges this view claiming that no identity is prior to discourses, and since identities are constructed via a constitutive outside, identity construction implies a friend/enemy relation against other identities. Hence, one cannot speak of a power-free position outside discourses.

What is stressed is the necessity to conceptualize the political not as a dimension limited to the state and the state apparatus, but as covering all social relations. Since every social reality is constructed within power relations, then every social formation is in the realm of the political, and the scope of the political is, in a sense, expanded. By highlighting the role of hegemony and discourse and by decentring the unified subject of liberalism, radical democracy points to the need for a different conceptualization of power. In radical democracy, power is not the ability to get someone or some groups to do what they would not otherwise do or the capacity for setting the agenda in the sense of determining not just the outcome but the rules of the game, it also involves the invisible aspects of power which operate through ideology, hegemony or discourse. Nevertheless, against Marxism which also

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[266] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

stresses the role of hegemony and ideology, radical democratic pluralism forces us to think hegemony in terms of different struggles and movements that do not solely depend on economic classes. In a way, the social formation is not taken as dominated by a single hegemony but by a plurality of hegemonies, which are subjected to contingent and partial fixations of meaning. This different conceptualization of power and politics is very significant for any discussion on pluralism since pluralism does not only mean the existence of difference or different identities; it also means the relations of power between these identities. Thus each conception of pluralism needs to problematize the nature of power relations within society.

The ubiquity of power relations is related to radical democracy's explanation for the construction of social reality. As discussed in the second chapter, in radical democracy, each social reality needs a 'constitutive outside' to be constructed. As social reality – identity, discourse and so on – is constructed relationally, that is through its exclusion of or by the constitutive outside, it is constructed through power relations. Chantal Mouffe argues that the liberal tradition characterized by John Rawls limits politics to procedural and rational processes by ignoring the tensions and antagonisms between identities and discourses. She writes:

> As far as politics is present at all in Rawls, it is reduced to 'the politics of interest', i.e. the pursuit of differing interests defined previously and independently of their possible articulation by competing alternative discourses.[268]

Mouffe argues that in Rawls, politics is reduced to a 'rational process of negotiation among private interests under the constraints of morality'. Hence, in this rational process, conflicts, antagonisms, relations of power or subordination are invisible.[269] This seems to be a plausible argument since Rawls's conceptions of politics is static

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[267] *Ibid.*, p. 115.
[268] C. Mouffe, 'Rawls: Political Philosophy without Politics', in D. Rasmussen (ed.), *Universalism vs. Communitarianism: Contemporary Debates in Ethics*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press,

and his conception of pluralism is highly questionable. To recall, Rawls's politics was restricted to the basics of society – that is, society's main social and economic institutions, which is to be governed by an 'overlapping consensus' on principles of justice. Rawls assumes that the principles of justice are set once and for all and after that, they are not subject to any bargaining. But the modeling device – original position – he uses in order to arrive at these principles is difference-blind.

As noted in the first chapter, reasonable people under the veil of ignorance are not aware of their social or economic status, personal capabilities or preferences; to put in a different way, they are not aware of their differences. And since these principles are set once and for all, and are not open to any renegotiation and redefinition, they may fail to correspond to the problems of the plural structure of society after the veil of ignorance is removed. Moreover, as radical democracy insists that identities are not fixed at a given time and that they are constantly changing by the articulation of different elements, the necessity of renegotiation, redefinition and transformation of any principle intended to regulate the society becomes indispensable.

In Rawls, the realm of politics becomes reduced to a rational process of negotiation among private interests when differences are thrown away into private space which is the domain of the social not the political. Then, most conflicts, antagonisms and relations of power disappear from the political realm. All differences are reduced to one dominant identity, namely citizenship, which becomes the basic category of the public space. Yet such a universal and neutral concept of citizenship will not help us to understand the differences that stem from various categories of identification such as gender, sexuality, ethnicity and the like.

1990 p. 224.
[269] *Ibid.*, p. 225.

IV.1.i.c The Distinction between Public and Private Space

The distinction between public space and private space, enhanced by the concept of neutral state in liberal theory, has been widely discussed in political philosophy after 1980s with the emergence of a literature on identity politics and multiculturalism. It is argued by certain authors that this distinction between public space and private space helps liberal democracy to cope with particularities, identifying public space with reason and universalist ideals, private space with particularity and difference.[270] The critics hold the idea that the public needs to be redefined vis-à-vis discontented voices, claiming that they and their differences are excluded from the realm of the political. The feminist motto 'the personal is the political' points to an eradication of the line between public and private.

This sharp distinction can be found explicitly in Rawls and his model of society. As argued in the first chapter, Rawls makes a distinction between the social and the political. He associates comprehensive doctrines – like religious, philosophical or moral belief systems – with social culture, and principles of justice with political culture.[271] Since comprehensive doctrines do stay out of the realm of political, and since no comprehensive doctrine aims to dominate the political realm, a society based upon the principles of political liberalism will be stable.[272]

Radical democracy sees the public/private distinction as one of the problems to be solved in liberal democracy. Chantal Mouffe argues that the liberal attempt to 'quarantine' diversity and plurality within the private space would fail to address the complex ways in which the private and public spaces are intertwined together

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[270] I. M. Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, pp. 99-111.
[271] J. Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 14.
[272] A. Baumeister, 'Two Liberalisms and The Politics of Difference', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 3:3, October 1998, p. 401.

throughout the social.[273] Since, the definition of the political is the arena of antagonisms, this distinction between public and private space becomes pointless. Chantal Mouffe criticizes Rawls for defending a 'well-ordered society', which rests on the elimination of the political:

> Politics is not affected by the existence of pluralism which Rawls understands only as the multiplicity of the conceptions of the good that people exercise in the private sphere where consensus based on self-interest reigns. This is the perfect liberal utopia. As current controversies about abortion clearly show, pluralism does not mean that all those conflicting conceptions of the good will coexist peacefully, without trying to intervene in the public sphere, and *the frontier between public and private is not given once and for all but constructed and constantly shifting. Moreover at any moment 'private' affairs can witness the emergence of antagonisms and thereby become politicized.*[274]

For radical democracy, since the sources of conflict or antagonism are multiple, public space must be taken as 'multifarious' and diverse, and must not be thought of as a formal political space associated with the state.[275] To put it in another way, the division between private and public requires periodic negotiation as new movements expose their 'systematic injuries previously hidden in the private sphere'.[276] Problematizing the distinction between the public and the private helps us to formulate an alternative conception of pluralism which gives voice in the public space to conflicts and antagonisms which were initially confined to the private space.

IV.1.i.d The Problem of Consensus

The idea of a consensus that is visible in most liberal interpretations of politics is incompatible with a radical democratic understanding of politics. Since society and identities are never complete, no consensus can succeed in reflecting the demands of

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[273] C. Mouffe, 'Deconstruction, Pragmatism and the Politics of Democracy', in C. Mouffe (ed.), *Deconstruction and Pragmatism*, London: Routledge, 1996, pp. 2-3.
[274] C. Mouffe, 'Rawls: Political Philosophy without Politics', p. 227, my emphasis.
[275] A. Little, 'Community and Radical Democracy', *Journal of Political Ideologies,* 7:3, 2002, pp. 377-8.
[276] W. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 194.

the groups concerned. Basing her argument on Schmitt's definition of politics[277], Mouffe argues that the liberal idea that a rational consensus could come out of free discussion blinds liberalism to the ubiquity of antagonism.[278] Mouffe argues that

> to negate the ineradicable character of antagonism and aim at universal rational consensus – this is the real threat to democracy. Indeed, this can lead to violence being unrecognized and hidden behind appeals to 'rationality', as is often the case in liberal thinking, which disguises the necessary frontiers and forms of exclusion behind pretenses of 'neutrality'.[279]

As radical democracy takes the political as characterized by antagonisms, it assumes that there will always be a debate about the nature of any principle and no final agreement can ever be reached. Division and conflict are unavoidable, and reconciliation of rival claims and interests can be partial and temporary.[280] A search for consensus can be hazardous for it assumes that individuals in a given society can transcend their particular disagreements and be united around a common interest or a common will. However, radical democracy does not totally reject the possibility of any consensus. It simply rejects the idea or the search for a perfect consensus. For instance, Laclau admits that a particular interest or struggle can acquire a universal character through the logic of equivalence. Moreover, the radical democratic project is based on a common will among different kinds of social struggles, which is to radicalize the principles of equality and liberty. Radical democracy admits that a hegemonic discourse can dominate the discursive field of society and can create a consensus and a common will around some privileged signifiers, but the important point is that this consensus and common will be partial and provisional since no hegemonic discourse can totally and permanently dominate the discursive field.

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[277] For Schmitt, politics can be understood only 'in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend and enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics and economics'. C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 111.

[278] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

[279] C. Mouffe, 'Demokrasi, İktidar ve Siyasal Düzen', in S. Benhabib (ed.), *Demokrasi ve Farklılık: Siyasal Düzenin Sınırlarının Tartışmaya Açılması*, İstanbul: Dünya Yerel Yönetim ve Demokrasi Akademisi, 1999, p. 348.

To sum up, 'our values, our institutions and way of life constitute one form of political order among a plurality of possible ones', and the consensus they create cannot exist without an 'outside' that will forever leave our liberal democratic values open to challenge.[281] This leaves the possibility that the differences that remain outside the current consensus might later create a hegemony themselves and define the rules and content of a new consensus open.

IV.1.ii Radical Democracy versus Communitarianism

Radical democracy and communitarianism seem to share many common grounds on the critiques they address to liberalism. Radical democracy attacks the rational and critical self of liberalism equipped with the capacity of self-determination and autonomy. Communitarian critique of liberalism as a whole is also based on the critique of this liberal conception of self. Communitarians try to situate selves, so do radical democrats. Radical democrats stress the impossibility of cross-cultural and cross-historical values, and point to the threat of totalization and the discarding of differences and antagonisms in the pursuit of universal values, whereas communitarians criticize the liberal drive to universalism in the name of particularity. Communitarians argue that cross-cultural and cross-historical – that is to say universal – values ignore the plurality and particularity of different ways of living, different cultures and traditions. Communitarians take identity as an ensemble of social relations that is constructed in dialogue with other members of community, while radical democrats bring out the relational character of identity formation. Laclau argues that '... identity is the construction of a complex and elaborated system of relations with other groups.'[282] These common criticisms notwithstanding, radical

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[280] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 113.
[281] *Ibid.*, p. 152.
[282] E. Laclau, 'Subject of Politics, Politics of Subject', *Differences,* 7:1, 1995, p. 147.

democracy and communitarianism differ in many respects, notably in their conception of self and their understanding of power and politics.

IV.1.ii.a The Conception of Self

The liberal unitary subject is criticized by communitarians who accuse liberals of ignoring the role of community over the individual and of defining the individual in an atomistic way, ignoring her/his embeddedness in communal practices. Although the communitarian self is contextual and 'situated' in communities and communal values, it cannot satisfy the radical democrats as it disregards the discursive dimension. Mouffe argues that the problem to be overcome is not moving from a 'unitary unencumbered self' to a 'unitary situated self', but the very idea of a unitary subject.[283]

In fact, radical democracy also holds the idea that the self is situated, but there is an important difference. For communitarians the self is situated, because it is embedded in social relations and communal values. Identity is shaped by shared communal values, namely the common good of society and social relations.[284] On the contrary, for radical democracy the self is situated in discourses, which are open to any articulation and redefinition. In other words, the communitarian belief that individuals belong to only one community, defined *physically* and *geographically*, which can be unified around a single idea of common good, conflicts with radical democracy's main assumption that individuals are 'multiple and *contradictory* subjects, inhabitants of a diversity of communities *constructed* by a variety of discourses and *precariously and temporally sutured at the intersection of possible discourses*'.[285]

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[283] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 21.
[284] M. Sandel, 'Introduction', in M. Sandel (ed.), *Liberalism and Its Critics*, New York: New York University Press, 1984, p. 5-6.
[285] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 21. My emphasis.

Against this radical democratic definition of self, communitarians take individuals as members of communities bounded and constructed by their social relations and communal values, which are defined with reference to a common good that binds the members and helps them to realize their self-fulfillment. Individuals are either born into language communities, or traditions, or social roles and values determined by a common good, but what characterizes communitarianism is that they take traditions, language communities or social roles and values as constitutive of identity. For instance MacIntyre argues that

> ... we all approach our circumstances as bearers of a particular *social identity. I am someone's son or daughter, someone else's cousin or uncle*; I am a *citizen* of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I *belong* to this tribe, that clan, this nation. [286]

Identity is defined through its social roles and its belonging to certain professions, communities or nationhood. MacIntyre continues:

> Hence what is good for me has to be what is good for one who inhabits these roles. As such I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectation and obligations. These constitute the given of life, my moral starting-point. This in part is what gives my life its moral particularity. [287]

MacIntyre passes from an ontological position to a normative one. The social roles or sense of belonging to a given community not only construct the individual but also become moral horizons that *should* govern her/his life.

A similar approach to the relation between individual and community can be observed in Charles Taylor's works. Taylor argues that an individual can acquire moral orientation – the meaning of values – by participation in a community of language and then s/he can become a moral subject. Since the individual is a 'self-interpreting animal' there is no 'structure of meanings for him independently of his

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[286] A. MacIntyre, *After Virtue,* London: Duckworth, 1985, pp. 204-5.
[287] *Ibid.*

interpretation of them.'[288] Taylor argues that the self is constructed in a dialogical way:

> ... I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition.. A self exists only within what I call 'webs of interlocution'.[289]

Charles Taylor and his conception of self is tangent to radical democracy's conception of self. Unlike other communitarian authors, Taylor stresses the importance of language: identity is constructed through language and dialogue between members of a language community. Language in Taylor can simply correspond to discourse in radical democracy. And like Taylor, radical democracy insists on a necessity of a 'constitutive outside' for any identity to be constructed, that is to say a dialogue between two elements. Nevertheless, Taylor misses the dimension of power and antagonisms while an identity is being constructed. In *The Politics of Recognition*, Taylor implicitly accepts the role of power relations in identity construction when he argues that identity is shaped by 'recognition' and 'misrecognition' of others.[290] But he does not really attach a significant importance to power and antagonism; he even tries to transcend them. On the contrary, in radical democracy every social reality is constructed as a difference; so antagonisms, exclusions and power relations are inevitable and natural.

IV.1.ii.b The Conception of Power and Politics

The invisibility of power relations and antagonisms is not only relevant for the conception of self. Laclau and Mouffe's radical rupture from communitarianism is the way in which the two conceptualize politics and power. Romanticizing

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[288] C. Taylor, 'Interpretation and the Sciences of Man', in C. Taylor, *Philosophy and the Human Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
[289] C. Taylor, *Sources of Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 36.
[290] C. Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in A. Gutmann (ed.), *Multiculturalism*, Princeton:

community and communal life, communitarians represent a utopian picture where political debate is a peaceful and benevolent process between friends around a common good, whereas Laclau and Mouffe stress the omnipresence of relations of power and subordination.

Mouffe argues that communitarians' emphasis on a substantive idea of common good and community evades pluralism and antagonisms, which are the constitutive elements of the political.[291] In her view, Sandel and MacIntyre tend to defend a pre-modern conception of politics, which they understand as the expression of shared moral values. Drawing on Lefort's analysis of modernity and democracy she argues that before the advent of modern societies, the community was organized around a substantive common good, but after modernity, societies are defined by a radical indeterminacy and one cannot speak of a community unified around a single moral vision.[292] She also claims that Sandel constitutes his arguments on a fundamental 'Aristotelian problematic' where there is not yet a separation between morality and politics, that is, 'common moral good' and 'common political good'.[293]

Although Laclau and Mouffe stress the centrality of the impossibility of society, and the inevitability of antagonisms and conflicts in the political realm, they seem to adopt a 'common political good' around the principles of equality and liberty. But they differ from communitarians when they insist on the partial and provisional character, hence the constant need of redefinition, of this common good.

Mouffe criticizes communitarians of ignoring the separation between morality and politics, between 'the common moral good' and 'the common political good'. They subordinate the political to the ethical, believing that in order to govern in terms of the common good it is necessary to encourage a singular moral vision. This

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Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 25.
[291] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 7.

in turn leads them to reject liberal pluralism. Mouffe, on the other hand, holds that we should not forego the gains of liberalism: the critique of individualism need not imply the abandonment of pluralism.[294] She argues that pluralism implies a plurality of moral goods and a political common good protecting these moral goods.[295]

Communitarians offer us a stable and closed society, in which all identities and shared values are and should be determined by a common moral good. This closed society is defined as a homogeneous entity, guided by the 'authoritative horizons', which are communal values. Taking communal values as 'authoritative horizons' can be very hazardous and exclusionary. In the name of community and shared values, differences can be quickly 'regulated' or eradicated from community, thereby leaving no space for pluralism. For example, Sandel argues that pornography should be regulated on the grounds that it offends a community's way of life.[296] Pornography can be objected on moral grounds by some groups within society. For instance some feminist groups strongly resist pornography due to the fact that it reproduces the subordination of women by male-defined ideas of sexuality and gender. This resistance is against a type of subordination. But Sandel, by arguing that it should be regulated because it offends a community's way of life, identifies the latter with a single moral view within society. Pluralism, on the contrary, stresses the plurality of moral views and ways of life within a society.

IV.2 Radical Democracy as Project

In order to evaluate radical democracy, one must make a distinction between radical democracy as a critique and radical democracy as a project. Radical democracy as a critique is a brave challenge to the dominant paradigm, liberalism and its critique

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[292] C. Mouffe, 'Rawls: Political Philosophy without Politics', p. 222-3.
[293] C. Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*, p. 32.
[294] *Ibid.*, pp. 32-3.
[295] C. Mouffe, 'Rawls: Political Philosophy without Politics'.

communitarianism. On the other hand, radical democracy as a project is, in many respects, incomplete due to some shortcomings.

Radical democracy as a critique has important contributions which can be grouped under three categories:

- *Radical democracy proposes critical descriptive tools – like discourse and antagonisms – compared to liberalism and communitarianism in order to understand the society.*

Radical democracy is much more concerned with how identities are formed than solutions to conflicts among identities compared to liberalism and communitarianism. While liberalism focuses too much on principles and procedures in order to cope with conflicts among different identities and worldviews, radical democracy attempts to explain how identities and discourses are constructed and what they are composed of. On the other hand, it also helps us to problematize communal values and relations which are taken for granted by communitarianism.

Radical democracy's main tool in this respect is its emphasis on the concept of discourse and the necessity to take political activities as texts to be read. This approach helps us to surpass the essentializing of identities and cultures. Essentializing an identity can be hazardous since at that time

> A powerful identity will strive to constitute a range of differences as intrinsically evil, irrational, abnormal, mad, sick, primitive, monstrous, dangerous or anarchical – as other. It does so in order to secure itself as intrinsically good, coherent, complete or rational in order to protect itself from the other that would unravel its self –certainty and capacity for collective mobilization if it established its legitimacy.[297]

An anti-essentialist approach paves the way to problematizing relations of subordination and domination within society, which can be neutralized through

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[296] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 259.
[297] W. Connolly, *Kimlik ve Fark,* İstanbul: Ayrıntı, 1995, p. 66.

stereotypes or prejudices. As Laclau argues, 'a preliminary task, however consists of exploring the intellectual assumptions of the prejudices that must be questioned, effecting a displacement that would allow a new view point to be formed.'[298] An anti-essentialist approach also creates new spaces of struggle against domination.

The linguistic roots of radical democracy lead it to place 'difference' at the center of their theoretical framework. This enables them to defend a conception of politics which reserves a much more important role to difference than both liberalism and communitarianism.

Finally, radical democracy's insistence to define every hegemonic formation as a partial fixation of meaning allows it to reject both the idea of 'perfect consensus' which characterizes liberalism and the idea of 'common good' which marks communitarianism, hence to discard any form of exclusion which might result from these ideas. In the light of this, radical democracy defines the political as an arena where different groups struggle with each other to establish their hegemony. Such a conception of the political in turn enables us to problematize and criticize any hegemonic formation.

- *Radical democracy offers realistic descriptive tools – like subject positions, constitutive outside, nodal points and articulation – contra liberalism and communitarianism.*

Radical democrats argue that the communitarian critique of the liberal conception of an 'empty' self stays too unrealistic by offering an idea of a community in which all members are united around a common good. On the contrary, modern societies are divided in conflicting religious and moral doctrines, cultures, values, ways of life, which hinder the existence of a 'totalized' society. Radical democracy, by its

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[298] E. Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time,* London, Verso, 1990, p. XV.

conception of subject positions and the idea of articulation provides a more accurate and illustrating framework in understanding modern societies. Taking individuals as an aggregate of subject positions can help us to grasp the multiple identities that they have and how these multiplicity of subject positions brings with it the indeterminacy and undecidability of their actions. Examining the proliferation of gay forms of identification in Hong Kong during the 1980s and 1990s, Ying Ho and Kat Tat Tsang demonstrate how lesbians and gays and their organizations are constituted through complex articulations of overlapping subject positions, some of which stand in a relation of tension to one another, in contrast to the common belief that such identities are constituted primarily by reference to a heterosexual/homosexual axis.[299]

Constitutive outside, nodal points or articulations can help us to explore how ideologies and hegemonies operate in a social structure from a different and more detailed perspective. In a recent article, Nur Betül Çelik examines Kemalism from such a perspective. She demonstrates how Kemalism, articulated around the nodal points of republicanism, nationalism, populism, statism, secularism and revolutionarism has become increasingly problematic during the 1990s, as a result of agitation from different forces in Turkish society, especially the Islamists and the Kurds.[300]

- *Radical democracy as a pluralist project offers a radicalization of social life.*

Although studies on radical democracy mainly uses the above-mentioned tools in an attempt to describe or 'read' a given social or political phenomenon, radical democracy proposes a project of transformation of social and political life through

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[299] P. S. Ho and K. T. Tsang, 'Beyond Being Gay: the proliferation of political identities in colonial Hong Kong', in D. Howarth *et al.* (eds), *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis,* Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000, p. 134-151.
[300] N. B. Çelik, 'The Constitution and the Dissolution of the Kemalist Imaginary', *ibid.*, p. 193-205.

the radicalization of the principles of liberty and equality as well. For radical democrats, this radicalization of social life must be realized through a creation of a counter-hegemonic formation, namely radical democracy, with the help of autonomous social struggles (new social movements) which are brought together through an articulation of political liberalism and the discourse of identity politics. United under the radical democratic hegemony, these struggles will fight their own wars; in a sense, they will be in a continuous 'war of positions' in order to replace the hegemonic formation of conservative liberalism.[301]

In contrast to the vast literature on radical democracy which uses the above descriptive and critical tools to make sense of a variety of case studies, this study aimed to find out whether radical democracy offers a consistent alternative model which will bring about this radicalization. In other words, it aimed to see whether radical democratic project stands as a viable alternative. In the following pages, it will be argued that its theoretical and normative contributions notwithstanding, radical democracy does not constitute a viable alternative to liberal democracy. Four main reasons will be identified for that: the problems with its conception of discourse as an all-explaining category, its perception of 'difference', the invisibility of any economic dimension or model, and finally the lack of a concrete procedural way of dealing with antagonisms. These problems will be grouped under the categories of 'theoretical' and 'practical' shortcomings.

IV.2.i Theoretical Shortcomings

While radical democracy tries to avoid any essentialist and reductionist approach that it considers as characteristic of liberalism and Marxism, it falls into the trap of fetishizing discourse. It will be argued that radical democracy has inconsistencies in

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[301] C. Mouffe, 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy', in D. Trend (ed.), *Radical Democracy:*

explaining the emergence of discourses and articulatory practices. Furthermore, although radical democracy aims to foster differences within a society and offers itself as an alternative to liberalism, by producing a hierarchy of differences that ranks different identities according to their adhesion to ethico-political principles of liberalism, it becomes a replica of liberalism.

IV.2.i.a Discourse as an all-explaining category

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* Laclau and Mouffe argue that they reject any distinction between the discursive and non-discursive dimension, and they argue that every social reality is constructed within discourses. To the concept of discourse, they include both linguistic and non-linguistic dimensions and principally refer to the meaning-producing systems. They accept that the non-discursive material world does exist but it remains meaningless for us. Our discursive attempts to distinguish between the discursive and non-discursive become impossible because we must always use discursively-constituted concepts to refer to the extra-discursive.[302] By taking discourse as meaning producing systems and by accepting the existence of a non-discursive reality, Laclau and Mouffe close the door to an idealist conception of politics.

Nevertheless, as discourse constructs everything, discourses become all-explaining categories in radical democracy. To recall, radical democracy not only takes subjects to be constituted within discourses, but it also assumes that subjects cannot be the origin of any social relation as all their experience and knowledge depend on discourse. If subjects are constructed within discourses, and if they are not the origin of social relations, then how do discourses construct subjects? Laclau and Mouffe's answer is that subjects are constructed as a difference; hence subject will

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Identity, Citizenship and the State, 1996, pp. 24-5.

always need a constitutive outside to be constructed. Moreover, collective actions are also products of discourses. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* Laclau and Mouffe claim that the emergence of a collective action depends on discursive conditions: relations of subordination must transform into relations of oppression in order to open the way to a collective action.[303]

To put it in another way, subordinated subjects cannot be aware of the relations of subordination unless a new discourse emerges and subjects find their subjectivity negated against this new emerging discourse. But if subjects, collective actions are all constructed in discourses and if subjects cannot be the origin of any social relation, that is to say if discourse constructs everything, then what constitutes the discourse? In Laclau and Mouffe's own words: 'Who is the articulating subject?'[304] Laclau and Mouffe argue that the articulating subject must be partially exterior to what it articulates – otherwise there would not be any articulation at all. On the other hand, however, they insist that such exteriority cannot be conceived as that existing between two different ontological levels. In short, their answer is that

> [i]t must therefore be the exteriority existing between subject positions located within certain discursive formations and 'elements' which have no precise discursive articulation. It is this ambiguity which makes possible articulation as a practice instituting nodal points which partially fix the meaning of the social in an organized system of differences.[305]

Then, Laclau and Mouffe claim that it is the exteriority between the elements – which are defined as differences that are not discursively articulated because of the floating character they acquire in periods of social crisis[306]– and subject positions that makes the articulation possible. Discourses and hegemonies are constructed through

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[302] A. M. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe,* p. 88.
[303] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy,* p. 153.
[304] *Ibid.,* p. 134.
[305] *Ibid.,* p. 135.
[306] *Ibid.,* p. 105.

an articulatory practice that depends on the exteriority between elements and subject positions.

Here, let us recall how Laclau and Mouffe define subject positions. For Laclau and Mouffe subject positions were the positioning of subjects within a discourse through social relations that create antagonism. If subject positions are produced through antagonism, then subject position is supposed to be constituted when a social agent finds herself/himself negated by other discourses. If subject positions are themselves defined with reference to other discourses, then we are faced with a circular answer.

IV.2.i.b The Hierarchy of Differences

Radical democracy's main contribution to political theory is its celebration of difference. Contrary to many liberal theories attempting to reconcile differences in a common denominator and transcend conflicts, radical democracy takes conflict and difference as the constitutive elements of the political. Nevertheless, there are problems with the radical democrats' perception of "difference". What radical democrats do is to celebrate certain forms of difference, notably those that are advanced by new social movements, while rejecting those based on 'illiberal' or 'anti-democratic' values or views which would, in their view, create domination and inequality, thereby implicitly producing a hierarchy of differences. The radical democratic bloc, which is supposed to be formed by social struggles fighting against neo-liberal hegemonic formation consists of 'urban, ecological, anti-authoritarian, feminist, anti-racist, ethnic, regional and sexual minorities etc.'.[307] As Mouffe argues

> All differences cannot be accepted .... a radical democratic project has also to be distinguished from other forms of 'post-modern' politics which emphasize heterogeneity,

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[307] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

dissemination and incommensurability and for which pluralism understood as the valorization of all differences.[308]

Although she puts great emphasis on difference – since she argues that the denial of differences creates relations of subordination – for her, differences are constructed in a 'hierarchical way'.[309] Groups committed to the principles of political liberalism are placed at the top and if an identity is constructed as a difference to liberalism, it takes place at the bottom of the hierarchy.

Similarly, while she defines 'adversaries' in agonistic pluralism, she emphasizes the adversary's commitment to the ethico-political principles of liberal democracy.[310] Adversary, she argues, is a 'legitimate enemy' with whom we share a common adhesion to the principles of liberty and equality.[311] Since the meaning of the principles of liberty and equality is never fixed, agonistic pluralism means that these principles can be interpreted differently by our adversaries. Le Pen in France or AKP in Turkey are the differences that should be tolerated and must be seen as adversaries since they have different interpretations of equality and liberty. On the contrary, radical Muslims in the Salman Rushdie case, in her view, are the enemies to be *destroyed*.[312] But where does 'different interpretation' stop and being an 'enemy' start? What criteria should be considered to determine the differences to be tolerated: Adherence to party system? To be labeled as a new social movement? To be an NGO? Mouffe has no specific answer. She claims that movements that do not intend to harm others can be taken as adversaries and as interpreting these principles differently.[313]

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[308] C. Mouffe, 'Preface: Democratic Politics Today', cited in A. M. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe*, p. 146. Similar arguments can be found in C. Mouffe, *Demokratik Paradoks*, p. 30-1.
[309] Interview with Chantal Mouffe, Galatasaray University, Istanbul, 26 June 2003.
[310] C. Mouffe, *Demokratik Paradoks*, p. 107.
[311] C. Mouffe, 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism', p. 755.
[312] Interview with Chantal Mouffe.
[313] *Ibid.*

It is clear that although radical democracy insists on the fact that principles of equality and liberty are open to any negotiation, 'illiberal' or 'anti-democratic' groups are ignored in its conception of pluralism. This, Mouffe calls, are the 'limits of pluralism' or 'the rules of the game'.[314] Radical democratic pluralism is not relativist pluralism valorizing all differences, but it is not 'rationalist pluralism' defended by liberalism either.[315] By arguing that radical democratic pluralism gives a positive connotation to differences and criticizes the pursuit of a consensus and homogeneity, Mouffe tries to transcend the limits of liberal pluralism.

Nevertheless, Mouffe's 'interpretation' of radical democratic pluralism is mainly based on a binary opposition: adversary versus enemy. Ironically, binary oppositions in structuralism were highly criticized by post-structuralist authors and it was Derrida who has shown how an identity's constitution is always based on excluding something and establishing a *violent hierarchy* between two poles: black/white, man/women, good/bad, etc. With Mouffe's category of adversary versus enemy, we have another hierarchy between the illiberal and the liberal, the democratic and the anti-democratic. Radical democratic pluralism has certainly an 'other' to be excluded and destroyed.

Following these arguments, one can argue that radical democratic project does not differ from liberalism in basic principles. Radical democracy without its descriptive tools is nothing but an echo of liberalism. For instance, it has strong affinities with the value-pluralism of Isaiah Berlin. The basics of value-pluralism of Isaiah Berlin is, to recall, that 'human beings do not actually possess knowledge of a harmonious moral universe, its constituent values are not commensurable'.[316]

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[314] *Ibid.*

[315] C. Mouffe, *Demokratik Paradoks*, p. 31.

[316] Berlin's value-pluralism rejects the Enlightenment goal of gradual convergence upon a universally shared set of liberal values by emphasizing the plurality of values. See A. Gutmann, 'Liberty and Pluralism in the Pursuit of the Non-Ideal', 1999, pp. 1042-3; A. Baumeister, 'Two Liberalisms and the

Moreover, these incompatible and incommensurable values can neither be compared nor ranked by a common measure. Since conflicts between values are inevitable, then conflicts between incommensurable cultures and identities become an unavoidable feature of human existence.[317] Nevertheless, the value-pluralism of Isaiah Berlin is constrained by two set of moral values: individual liberty and the avoidance of human suffering. Pluralism should be accompanied by a minimal measure of individual liberty. In his writings, Berlin stresses that he is not a relativist, just like Mouffe did.[318] In other words, celebration of difference has limits in both Berlin and Mouffe. Also Mouffe comes close to Rawls in excluding illiberal ideas.

Hence, in the light of these, can radical democracy bring an advanced dimension to the discussion of difference in liberal pluralism? Although radical democracy offers original tools in understanding difference in the political realm by adopting Derrida, Lacan and Gramsci, it has no better answers to the questions 'How can societies cope with different philosophical or moral worldviews and their representation in the political?' or 'To what degree can liberal democracy tolerate illiberal or anti-democratic groups within society?' than liberalism. Nevertheless, there is a difference: while arguing that no hegemonic formation can remain fixed, radical democracy implies that each hegemonic formation will produce its counter-hegemony. The logic behind agonistic pluralism is the inevitability and the necessity of counter-hegemonic struggle. The answer to the question 'How can societies cope with different worldviews' consists in either including them into the hegemonic formation or fight them.

Against this, it needs to be noted that there is no room in radical democratic hegemonic formation for illiberal or anti-democratic groups. Then the task of radical

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Politics of Difference', 1998; J. Crowder, 'Pluralism and Liberalism', 1994.
[317] *Ibid.*

democracy is either to make these groups 'liberal' and 'democratic' or to exclude and destroy them. Given this, who is radical democracy's 'other'? It is clear that its other is defined within the parameters of the liberal paradigm. Then most of what radical democracy says about difference loses its significance, and it is reduced to the distinction between 'good minorities' and 'bad minorities' that characterize liberal multiculturalism.[319]

IV.2.ii The Lack of Procedural and Practical Solutions

Radical democracy also has problems in offering practical and procedural solutions concerning the state, the political system, or the economic structure. These problems will be explained following two lines: the invisibility of the economic dimension and the lack of procedural solutions to deal with antagonisms. The invisibility of the economic dimension is important because radical democrats stress that they attempt to articulate political liberalism in radical democratic project, not economic liberalism. Then, under these circumstances, the economic model that they propose in place of economic liberalism has vital importance for their project. The lack of procedural solutions to deal with antagonisms is also very important since radical democracy aims to radicalize existing liberal democracies and implies a radical transformation of the existing conceptualizations of politics and society.

IV.2.ii.a The Invisibility of Economic Dimension

Radical democrats do argue that every project for radical democracy implies a socialist dimension since it is necessary to put an end to capitalist relations of production which are the basis of numerous forms of subordination. However, as many critics rightly expostulate, they have not fully developed the political economic

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[318] I. Berlin, 'The First and the Last', *New York Review of Books,* 45:8, 1998.
[319] W. Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

implications of their position.[320] Although in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe firmly defend that capitalism must be abandoned by arguing that '... socialism is *one* of the components of a project for radical democracy' and by calling for a 'true participation by all subjects in decisions about what is to be produced' and how it is to be produced and to be distributed[321], they do not explicitly offer an economic model supposed to replace capitalism. Nevertheless, in an interview, Chantal Mouffe seems to discard socialism as a component of radical democratic project. She argues that

> Capitalism is not a monolithic system. There will not be a watershed, nor shall we will wake up one morning and find that capitalism is gone. We will probably always be dealing with a mixed economy. Britain, Sweden and the US are 'capitalist' countries but have different forms of mixed economy. And the disastrous Soviet experiment showed that we cannot do without some market elements. While things like health and education should not be subject to market, there are elements in retail and wholesale sectors that work privately. Even Marx never proposed the absolute nationalization of everything.[322]

Although in her early works Mouffe, stresses the necessity to distinguish between political liberalism and economic liberalism, arguing that there is no essential link between the two and they can be separated, in her later writings she seem to be more close to economic liberalism and market economy.

IV.2.ii.b Dealing with Antagonisms in Practice

By taking antagonisms as constitutive of the political and social reality, and social identities as constructed by discourses, radical democracy breaks radically with liberalism and Marxism on theoretical grounds. Since every identity is constructed as a difference in discourses and by a constitutive outside, radical democracy discards

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[320] A. M. Smith, *Laclau and Mouffe*, p. 19; D. Trend, 'Introduction', in D. Trend (ed.), *Radical Democracy*.
[321] E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, p. 178.
[322] 'A Radical Left Project?', Chantal Mouffe interviewed by Mike Power, in S. Wilks (ed.), *Talking About Tomorrow*, London: Pluto, 1993, pp. 111-12.

the dream of a power-free society reached by a consensus or a common will. As Laclau puts it:

> A harmonious society [a free society from which power has been totally eliminated...] is impossible because power is the condition for society to be possible... Destroying the hierarchies on which sexual or racial discrimination is based will, at some point, always require the construction of other exclusions for collective identities to be able to emerge.[323]

The society proposed by radical democracy, in which antagonisms and conflicts cannot be eliminated as they are the constituents of the political, will never cease to be a harmonious society and will never be unified around a common will or a general consensus. Then how will radical democracy deal with these antagonisms and social conflicts better than non-radical democratic approaches? What specific procedures and practical solutions does radical democracy offer in place of the existing ones? These questions remain unanswered since radical democracy does not have specific solutions for specific problems. Although Laclau and Mouffe, throughout their works, take diversity as a desirable feature of modern societies that needs to be fostered, they do not suggest practical (that is procedural) ways of dealing with the antagonisms that will emerge from the presence of diversity in society. Although radical democracy represents itself as an alternative to liberal democracy, throughout their works neither Laclau nor Mouffe problematize any practical/procedural suggestions against liberalism, which would bring solutions to the 'difference-blind', 'consensus-centered' liberalism. If radical democracy is a change within the liberal state, what kind of practical/procedural suggestions does radical democracy have in relation to the type of government? Central authority or local governments? What changes in liberal democracies does radical democracy offer concerning the party system? For Mouffe, these are not 'legitimate' questions since every society will

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[323] E. Laclau, *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time,* p. 33.

'redefine' these processes.[324] And this redefinition is constrained by the main principles of political liberalism – equality and liberty.

IV.3 Concluding Remarks

This chapter aimed to discuss whether radical democracy can contribute to the on-going debate between liberalism and communitarianism, and to the understanding and the fostering of differences in our societies. It also aimed to discuss whether radical democratic pluralism can constitute a viable alternative to the dominant paradigm of pluralism, namely liberal pluralism. In this line, first similarities and differences between radical democracy and liberalism were explored. It was revealed that radical democracy and liberalism have a different conception of self and of power and politics. Radical democracy's discursively constructed self makes difference an ontological reality, not a problem to deal with. This enables radical democracy to detect the relations of power among differences and their manifestation in politics. It was also argued that radical democracy rejects liberalism's distinction between public and private and the idea of consensus, arguing that both leads to the exclusion of some differences at the expense of others.

This was followed by an examination of the tension between communitarianism and radical democracy, which stemmed from their different conceptions of self, power and politics. Rejecting the 'unitary situated self' of communitarianism, radical democracy stressed the contingent and partial character of the self which is constructed through discourses. Communitarians' emphasis on a common moral good was also criticized by radical democrats who underlined instead the plurality of moral goods which can be united around a common political good.

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[324] Interview with Chantal Mouffe.

Finally, they accused communitarians for ignoring the existence of power relations and antagonisms within society.

Despite its theoretical contributions and its success in deconstructing these approaches through such theoretical tools as discourse, subject positions and hegemony, it was argued that radical democracy cannot constitute a viable alternative since it remains incomplete in terms of offering practical solutions and inconsistent in its theoretical framework.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The changes in international political conjuncture, the emergence of identity politics and globalization force us to rethink and reinterpret the concept of pluralism. This argument was the point of departure of this study. The hybridity and complexity of identities and cultures, it was argued, led to a crisis of representation and recognition of differences in social and political life bedeviling the nation-state, which initiated an academic debate on the nature of pluralism. In the last fifteen years, the hegemonic formulation of pluralism, namely liberal pluralism, has been criticized on both practical and philosophical grounds. This study focused on the latter. Highlighting radical democratic pluralism among other critiques addressed to liberalism, the above discussion aimed to see, first, whether radical democratic pluralism has any contribution to make to the ongoing intense dialogue between communitarians and liberals and, second, whether radical democratic pluralism can offer a solution to the representation crisis which threatens to undermine liberal democracies, with the proliferation of cultural diversity and the accompanying rise of identity politics.

With this aim, the first chapter aimed to situate the concept of pluralism in a historical context and to give an outline of liberal and communitarian pluralisms. Following a line from John Locke to Isaiah Berlin, liberal pluralism has a strong commitment to individualism. Liberal pluralism, which is taken as the plurality of either values and ways of life, took individuals as a unit of analysis, rather than communities or groups within society. The universalist conception of human nature – the belief that human beings share a common nature across cultures – characterized liberal pluralism. Although their problematization of differences was completely different, both John Rawls and Isaiah Berlin are trapped in the same universalist conception of human nature. For Rawls, individuals are rational beings, whereas for Berlin grounds his insistence on the avoidance of human suffering on a shared human essence. This universalist assumption is not only present in their conceptions of human nature, but also in the principles they set out in order to govern the pluralist society.

This emphasis on individuality and the universality of human nature led to the rise of discontented voices in the last quarter of the twentieth century. The voices of ethnic minorities, women, blacks, gays that are manifested through identity politics began to shake liberalism and liberal institutions from their foundations. At the same time, the philosophical roots of liberalism came under attack by communitarianism, which problematized the individualism of liberalism, its conception of society, its notion of neutral state and the claim for universality. The basic unit of analysis for communitarians is groups and communities within society, not individuals. And by their conception of the 'situated self', they undermined liberalism's belief in a universal human nature and principles that have a universal validity.

In the light of these considerations, the second chapter introduced radical democracy as a critique of both liberalism and communitarianism. First, the

similarities and differences between radical democracy and classical Marxism were explored. This was followed by a discussion of the theoretical components of radical democracy like discourse, identity and subject positions, antagonisms, hegemony, their conception of the social and the political.

Building on this discussion, radical democracy's conception of pluralism was introduced. While doing this, radical democratic pluralism as described in Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* and the late writings of Mouffe is taken separately. Such a distinction is necessary because in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, the authors develop their formulation of pluralism thorough coalitions of new social movements. On the contrary, in her late writings Mouffe sets out an agonistic pluralism by introducing categories like enemy/adversary/friend following Carl Schmitt and his conceptualization of politics. Hence she seems partly to abandon the formulation of pluralism through collective identities which characterized their early work.

The third chapter concentrated on a comparison of radical democracy, liberalism and communitarianism and their understanding of pluralism thorough their conception of identity, power and politics. It was argued that radical democracy had strong affinities with liberalism. Like Marxism, Laclau and Mouffe attempt to disarticulate liberalism from certain elements. In the case of liberalism, those were the rational, universalist and economic elements. The first and the most strong affinity between liberalism and radical democracy was, then, a commitment to the defense of rights, recognition of pluralism, limitation of the role of the state and separation of powers. Nevertheless, it was also claimed that radical democracy differed from liberalism by adopting different ontological standpoints. By its emphasis on discourse, decentered subject, its particular conception of the political

and society and its rejection of consensus, radical democracy is an attempt to revise liberalism.

Then, the chapter provided a comparison between radical democracy and communitarianism, two approaches that aimed to revise liberalism. It was argued that Walzer and Taylor stand more close to radical democracy, whereas Sandel and McIntyre, Chantal Mouffe believed, defended a pre-modern conception of politics, which will not be able to answer the hybrid and complex structure of today's societies.

This was followed by a critical assessment of the viability of radical democratic pluralism as an alternative project. It was argued that due to its theoretical shortcomings – like its conception of discourse, which totally enables agents and its hierarchy of differences – and lack of procedural and practical solutions – the lack of economic dimension and the procedural ways to deal with antagonisms –, radical democracy cannot be a viable alternative to liberal pluralism.

V.1   The Promise of Radical Democratic Pluralism

So should radical democratic theory be totally discarded? The answer to this question perhaps, is same with Laclau's comment on Marxism. Radical democracy should be broken up into pieces and we must hold onto its best fragments. The above critiques notwithstanding, radical democracy has still important contributions to make to the reconceptualization of difference and pluralism and has still something to say on the debate between liberals and communitarians by criticizing their conception of self, society, power and by offering discourse as a new subject of inquiry.

There are still questions to be answered: Can radical democracy help us to make sense of the variety of identities and their increasing demands that characterize today's increasingly fragmented world? Can radical democracy offer a solution to

tensions created by the simultaneous homogenization and heterogenization of the social and political landscape? Can the various social movements form temporary coalitions against the current hegemony and can radical democracy help them to achieve such a temporary and conflictual consensus, or is it all utopia?

Radical democracy is also more open to change and provides useful tools in explaining and understanding social change. Since radical democracy takes the relational character of identity – that all identities are constructed as a difference – as a starting point, it renounces the fixation of identities in a system and the conception of society. This leads the way to imagine the possibility of alternative political systems since political struggle in radical democracy is conceptualized as the continuous battle between political groups to hegemonize the discursive field. As Appadurai claims 'the imagination, especially when collective, can become the fuel for action ... the imagination, is today a staging ground for action and not only for escape.'[325] That is the promise of radical democracy and radical democratic pluralism.

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[325] A. Appadurai, 'Here and Now', in A. Appadurai, Modernity at Large, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 7.

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APPENDIX

Glossary[*]

Adversaries: Legitimate enemies who share a common adhesion to the ethico-political principles of democracy.

Agonistic pluralism: Chantal Mouffe's idea of pluralism based on an understanding of political relations as a contest between *adversaries*.

Antagonism: The fundamental feature of the political in radical democracy. Antagonism is the result of relations of oppression. An antagonism occurs when a social agent – constructed in a specific way through certain existing discourses – finds his/her identity negated by other discourses or practices.

Articulation: Any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The core of radical democracy's definition of *discourse*.

Basics of society: A society's main social and economic institutions, in John Rawls.

Chain of equivalence: The creation of equivalential identities among various social struggles with the aim of creating a counter-hegemony against a dominant discursive system

Comprehensive doctrines: In Rawlsian terminology, any kind of conception of good life: conceptions of what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character, as well as ideals of friendship, and much else that is to inform our conduct, and in the limit to our life as a whole.

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[*] The terms that are defined in the Glossary will be referred to in italics.

Constitutive outside: In radical democracy, identity is relational and its condition of existence is the affirmation of a difference through the determination of an 'other', which plays the role of a *constitutive outside*. As each social reality (identity, discourse, etc.) is constructed as a difference, a *constitutive outside* is an ontological necessity.

Discourse: A system of linked signs that refers to the individual social networks of communication through the medium of language or non-verbal sign systems. In radical democracy, the structured totality resulting from an articulatory practice, i.e. a framework that articulates different independent elements by altering their meanings and identities.

Family resemblances: The claim that there is no single world structure or basic foundation which gives universal meaning to terms or concepts: they become meaningful in the context in which they are used in conjunction with other terms or concepts, just like the moves in a game are meaningful in virtue of the rules of the game or other moves in that game. Laclau and Mouffe argue that the status of struggles against the hegemonic formation must be conceived in terms of *family resemblances*; they have similarities but they are not the same.

Hegemonic formation: The outcome of common projects that involve the *articulation* of different identities and social struggles with the aim of creating a new social order.

Hegemony: In Gramsci, the *articulation* of different forces by the working class, in which the proletariat transcends its corporate interests and represents the interests of the people; a general political logic involving the construction of a new 'common

sense'. In radical democracy, the partial fixing of the relation between *signifier* and *signified* is called *hegemony*.

Interpellation: In Althusser, the mechanism through which ideology constitutes people as subjects.

Justice as fairness: Rawls's conception of justice based on two principles, namely the fair value of political liberties and the fair equality of opportunity to the benefit of the least advantaged members of society. These principles of justice may be shared by all citizens, hence constitute the basis of a just and stable society.

Monism: The idea of the world and of human society as a single intelligible structure.

Nodal points: Privileged signifiers or reference points in a discourse that bind together a particular system of meaning.

Original position: The methodological abstraction Rawls used to arrive at his basic principles of justice. In the *original position*, people are behind a *veil of ignorance*, which prevents them from knowing their social status, capabilities, conceptions of good, economic and social conditions, religion, sex or ethnicity. Since people will be unaware of their personal interests, none of them will be more advantageous than others, thus, the determination of the principles of justice will be just and fair.

Overlapping consensus: In Rawls, the consensus reached by citizens on the principles of justice which will regulate the *basics of society*.

Points de capiton: See *nodal points*.

Politics of antagonism: A conception of politics in which every power position is constructed and negotiated anew, in which differences must be accepted as a good in itself, and no relation between class and political position is assumed. For radical democracy, the 'infinite character of conflict' is a vital source for sustaining democracy

Signified: In Saussurean linguistics, the concept or the object that is being referred.

Signifier: In Saussurean linguistics, a codified sound or image.

State-perfectionism: This is based on the idea that people can make mistakes about the value of their activities. Hence a perfectionist state can and should endourage people to adopt conceptions of the good that conform to the community's way of life.

Subject positions: The positioning of subjects within a discourse or the multiple forms by which agents are produced as social actors through antagonism or the social relations that create antagonism.

Suture: A term whose current theoretical use is drawn from Lacanian psychoanalysis and has been developed in semiotic film theory. In its original surgical meaning, a *suture* marks the absence of a former identity, as when cut flesh heals but leaves a scar marking difference. Laclau and Mouffe's application of this concept to the field of politics carries with it the idea that the traces of the old cannot be destroyed but remain as sedimentary deposits, even where the new is trying to exclude the old. Laclau and Mouffe present us with a body politic whose skin is permanently split open, necessitating ceaseless duty in the emergency room for the surgeons of hegemony whose fate it is to try and close, with difficulty and temporarily, the gaps.

Symbolic order: In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the linguistic, grammatical and cultural order within which the subject is formed. Lacan uses the term 'symbolic' to describe the closed linguistic/cultural order of the signifiers which can only have a meaning in the context of their relations with each other.

Unencumbered self: The liberal conception of self, according to communitarians, which sees the self as prior to its socially given roles and relations, and capable of holding the features of its social situation at a distance and judging them according to the dictates of reason.

Unified subject: The liberal conception of self, according to radical democrats, which is defined as an agent both rational and transparent to itself, as origin and basis of social relations and with a supposed unity and homogeneity of the ensemble of its positions.

Value-pluralism: The thesis that there are many values in the universe which cannot be reduced to a single value. The general claim of value pluralism is that values or, more specifically, the conceptions of goods and ways of life, cannot be compared or ranked by a common measure, that they are incommensurable.

Veil of ignorance: The methodological device Rawls used to describe individuals in a pre-political condition, what he terms the *original position*. The *veil of ignorance* prevents people from knowing their social status, capabilities, conceptions of good, economic and social conditions, religion, sex or ethnicity.

Interview with Chantal Mouffe

(by A. Seda Yüksel)

Galatasaray University, Istanbul, June 26, 2003

SY: Ernesto Laclau and you suggest that radical democracy is a change within the liberal state, not a radical alternative to it. In this context, staying within the limits of representative liberal democracies, what kind of practical/procedural suggestion does radical democracy have in relation to type of government?

CM: This is not a legitimate question. Radical democracy does not discuss such issues. Or it does not pretend to offer answers to such questions. Type of government will change from one society to the other. This is something that will be renegotiated and redefined by the members of society continuously.

SY: I am asking this question because other theories of pluralism usually make suggestions concerning the type of government. For example, we see that American pluralists emphasize the role of interest groups and associations in society. Communitarians favor decentralized political structures. How do you see such suggestions?

CM: Political associations are of course important. For example, in *The Return of the Political*, I discuss Paul Hirst's idea of associative democracy who argues that a non-Marxist socialism is possible. He thinks that the state should assist and supervise associations. And because of its emphasis on the plurality and autonomy of associations, such a democracy will enhance pluralism. For my part, I put special emphasis on citizenship. And I defend a different conception of citizenship. A radical democratic citizen must be an active citizen, somebody who thinks of herself as

participating in a collective undertaking. But as I said, radical democracy does not have a definite answer to your question.

SY: In your book *The Democratic Paradox*, you argue that all differences cannot be accepted and this is what distinguishes radical democracy from postmodern politics. Then my question is which differences are acceptable and how do you see illiberal or anti-democratic groups within society?

CM: The existence of differences is an explanation of relations of subordination because the denial of differences creates and should create relations of subordination. But differences are constructed in a hierarchical way. Not all differences are equal in society. This led me to develop the concepts of 'adversary' and 'enemy'. Adversaries are our legitimate enemies. Pluralism must accept the existence of adversaries. Enemies, on the other hand, are the limits of pluralism. Here I am taking pluralism as a value but a liberal value. Pluralism means the respect for individual rights, everybody having the right to choose their own ends, to their own way of life and to develop in their own way. Do you remember the case of Salman Rushdie? He was condemned to death by Moslem authorities for denigrating Islam in his novel *The Satanic Verses*. This led to a lively debate in Western Europe, especially Britain. At that time, I was also asked what I thought about this complicated issue. I told them that I found this verdict unacceptable, and that the Moslem authorities who called upon Rushdie's death should be considered as our enemies. Pluralism requires acceptance of political liberalism's basic principles of liberty and equality. In other words, you have to accept the rules of the game.

SY: Can we then say that your distinction between adversary and enemy can be explained by the harm principle in liberalism?

CM: I would not formulate it that way, but yes, you are right. Adversaries should respect other values and refrain from harming each other.

SY: Then in the light of these, what is the role of the state in dealing with antagonisms? Where does radical democracy stand between liberals defending state neutrality and communitarians defending state-perfectionism?

CM: State cannot be neutral. I advocate an ethical state, a state which has values, and which protects those values. I would like to draw your attention to something else here. Values can be interpreted in different ways. For instance in France, Le Pen and his party were subject to severe criticisms. Many people thought they were a threat to liberty and equality. Did they really devalue these principles? I think not, they did not devalue liberty and equality. They just interpreted them differently, like your current government. This [interpreting differently] is very important because this is part of agonism. We must accept that values do not have a single meaning. What I am offering here is not a rational solution, but a pragmatic one. If we accept these different interpretations, we can coexist with them.

SY: In *The Return of the Political*, you criticize communitarianism, especially that of Sandel and McIntyre, arguing that they defend a pre-modern conception of politics which contradicts with pluralism. In your opinion, does this critique apply for Taylor or Walzer as well?

CM: I think Taylor and Walzer are liberal communitarians. They are communitarians epistemologically, liberals politically. They are epistemologically communitarians because they defend the notion of unencumbered self and reject Kant. But they are more sensitive to political liberalism's liberty and equality than Sandel and McIntyre.

SY: For instance, Taylor explains the construction of identity in a similar way: he argues that identities are constructed dialogically...

CM: Yes, but in Taylor it is too dialogical. There is no room for antagonism in his conceptualization. This is where radical democracy departs from Taylor, we argue that identity and antagonism cannot be thought of separately.

SY: I believe there are some similarities between Isaiah Berlin's pluralism and radical democratic pluralism. In your opinion, how does radical democratic pluralism differ from value pluralism?

CM: I do not think that Berlin has a coherent theory of pluralism. In any case, I do not see any similarities. He follows Weber and his pluralism is more a methodological pluralism. The political plays no role in his pluralism.